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LECTURES

ON THE

EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE,

TO THE

E P H E S I A N S,

CHAPTER I.

EXPOSITORY AND PRACTICAL.

BY

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ST. JOHN, N. B.

J. & A. McMILLAN, 78 PRINCE WILLIAM STREET.
1867.

J. & A. McMillan, Printers, 78 Prince William Street.

PREFACE.

The following Lectures are not presented to the public as containing either a complete or a minute exposition of this remarkable portion of Scripture—the First chapter of Ephesians ; but, simply, as setting forth and illustrating, in a plain and easy manner, for readers in general, the leading and fundamental doctrines of the Gospel therein contained. We have endeavoured to keep in view the practical application of every subject which we have discussed, and trust that our readers will not fail to lay such application to heart, and that they may receive grace to enable them to ‘profit withal.’

We do not expect that, in every point, we have succeeded in exactly representing the views of the Inspired Apostle ; but, the general system or scheme of Scriptural doctrine which underlies or pervades these Lectures, we are prepared to defend—as the only foundation on which a sinner can build for eternity—as, in short, the Gospel of our salvation.

On minute points of interpretation there are differences between the most eminent recent critics, such as Hodge, Eadie, Alford, Ellicott,—but it is remarkable how nearly they all coincide in their views of the most important doctrines in this chapter.

The Lectures are printed as they were originally delivered, with the exception of a few unimportant corrections.

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LECTURE. I.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—1-2.

"Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God to the Saints which are at Ephesus and to the faithful in Christ Jesus; Grace be to you and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

It was when Paul was returning to Jerusalem—to head quarters, from his second missionary and apostolic journey. that he first set foot in the ancient and famous city of Ephesus. Leaving behind him the walls of luxurious Corinth, after a prolonged and very successful sojourn, and crossing the tumultuous Ægean, along with his converts Aquila and Priscilla,* who 'were tent-makers' like himself, and whom he found to be 'helpers in Christ Jesus,' Paul reached the Emporium of the East—the capital of Proconsular Asia—and the seat of the temple of Diana, in or about the year of our Lord fifty-four. Then, for the first time, as far as we can learn, was the gospel made known and preached in

* Acts 18. 2-3.

that citadel of ancient art, science, and religion. As Paul surveyed the customs of the people, and contemplated their chief occupations, as he looked on that temple whose immense size and splendid decorations made it one of the seven wonders of the world, as he fixed his eyes on that monster image of the great goddess,* which, it was believed, fell down from Jupiter, how must the former feeling have come back to him, that was stirred up in him at Athens ‘when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.’

Paul could not, however, on the occasion of his first visit to Ephesus, prolong his stay; so after reasoning with the Jews in their synagogue he hastened to Jerusalem, leaving Aquila and Priscilla on the field of labour which he had thus opened up, and promising to return again if God willed.

These faithful witnesses were soon after joined by Apollos, a native of Alexandria, “an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in the spirit he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue, whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard they took him unto them and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” It is said of Apollos that, when he went to Achaia, “he mightily convinced the Jews and that publicly, shewing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.” Under the influence of such a man, guided by the sober and enlightened wisdom of Aquila and Priscilla, the cause of Christ would be

* Acts 19. 35.

doubtless well sustained in the absence of the Apostle. When Paul returned from Jerusalem he found* certain disciples who had been baptized unto John's baptism, but who had not received the Holy Ghost i. e., in his special gifts, and who said that they had not so much as heard whether there was any Holy Ghost. Paul explained to them the nature of John's baptism as being a baptism of repentance, and also of faith in Christ Jesus about to come. The number of the men was about twelve. Whether Paul rebaptized them may be questioned,† but he certainly communicated to them the special gifts of the Holy Ghost, so that they spake with tongues and prophesied. We may suppose that there were other believers besides these twelve, by this time, if we allow that Aquila and Priscilla, as well as Apollos, had been blessed to any extent in their labours. At all events these twelve *men* might represent a church, including a corresponding number of women and children of from forty to fifty souls. With such a nucleus was the church of Ephesus commenced. Under the care of the Apostle, 'God bearing witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will,'‡ this infant church was mightily advanced, during his sojourn with it, which extended to a period of at least two years and three months. For the first three months he went to the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews; but being opposed and hindered he withdrew to the school of one Tyrannus, with the disciples, and continued to dispute daily, and as we may safely conclude, to exercise all

* Acts 19 1-7.

† See Appendix A.

‡ Heb. ii. 4.

the functions of his apostolic and ministerial office, for the remaining period of two years.* He taught them both publicly and privately. He kept back nothing, but declared to them the whole counsel of God. He must have ordained elders or bishops, that is, overseers, among them. He, in short, preached to them the whole gospel in its fulness and purity, and forewarned them against the intrusion or uprising of false and injurious teachers. From the narrative, we gather that his labours were crowned with success, and that a large and flourishing church was formed in Ephesus in that space of time. From this as a centre, also, the light of the gospel shone far and wide; 'so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.' It was here that several incidents of a memorable character befell the Apostle. Here 'God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul.' Here the Spirit of God triumphed over the spirit of evil, giving evidence of Paul's apostolic character to the confusion of certain vagabond Jews who were Exorcists. 'Jesus I know,' said the evil spirit, 'and Paul I know, but who are ye?' and 'many of them which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men' to the value of fifty thousand (pieces) of silver. Here the famous uproar took place at the instigation of Demetrius and other craftsmen whose occupation was to make 'silver shrines for Diana,' because through the gospel their 'craft was in danger,' and this brought the Apostle and the church itself

* Acts xix. 8, &c.

into deep waters; but it was overruled for its still greater confirmation and enlargement.

After this affair the Apostle left Ephesus, but not without making provision, as you might expect he would, for the support and futherance of the gospel. When he went into Macedonia he 'besought Timothy to abide still at Ephesus.*' After spending a short time in visiting the churches in Macedonia, and as he was on his way to Jerusalem, Paul sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church to meet him at Miletus, a seaport town about forty miles south from Ephesus, and in importance next to Ephesus in these times and places. There he delivered to them a fervent charge 'to take heed unto themselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, to feed the church of God, which he had purchased with his own blood.†' In his address he predicts that false teachers would soon arise among them, not sparing the flock. The Apostle, after his leaving Ephesus, gave Timothy a special charge to watch over the church there; and from the epistles to Timothy we learn many things which are of considerable importance in its history.

We find that the prediction of Paul, with respect to the rise of false teachers, came true, in spite of his using the precaution to leave Timothy to charge some that they teach no other doctrine. In the book of Revelation, in the address to the angel of the church of Ephesus, mention is made of the Nicolaitanes, a sect of which we know little, except that their deeds were hateful to the Lord, as they were also to the

*1 Tim. i. 3.

†Acts xx. 28.

Ephesian church. Though the church is, there, reprovèd for departing from its first love, and warnèd to repent, yet on the whole, it is commended for its works and patience and fidelity.

The Apostle John is, according to early tradition, said to have had Ephesus as the seat of his labours, towards the close of his life.

Thus important, every way, was the early church of Ephesus. It was established in the very citadel and stronghold of the empire of Diana, 'whom all Asia and the world worshipped.' It was the centre from which the gospel radiated all round in these parts. It soon became numerically strong. Planted by Paul, watered by Apollos, nurtured and guarded by Timothy, and finally honoured by the presence of the venerable John, this vineyard, over and above all, had received the increase from God, and is, therefore, the first mentioned, and probably the most important of the seven churches of Asia, whose names are written in the Apocalypse.

How long exactly, this church continued to flourish and exist it were difficult to determine. We are informed by history that two most important councils of the Universal Church, one in A. D. 431, and the other in A. D. 449, to decide the doctrine as to the person and natures of Christ, were held at Ephesus; and from this we conclude that the church may have remained in existence for some time after the last of these dates. But at length it vanished, and now the traveller scarcely knows where to fix the site of ancient Ephesus. City and church and all have disappeared, and

but for certain ruins which are identified with the 'theatre' into which 'all the people rushed,' on the occasion of Demetrius's uproar, it might be doubted by some whether the whole history is not an ancient myth. The church had deteriorated—it had forsaken its first love—its faithful ones had been gathered into glory, and the candlestick was finally removed.

As Paul, however, lay a prisoner at Rome, five years after his first visit to Ephesus, what stirring associations would crowd on his memory, and how would he embrace an opportunity of writing to the church that owned him as its father, and which had not as yet disgraced its connection.

This epistle, then, it is thought, on good evidence, was written from Rome, between 59 and 61, A. D., at a period of the Apostle's imprisonment, when the severity of his bonds was somewhat relaxed, when he enjoyed the liberty of preaching the gospel, and when he even entertained the hope of being soon released. All this may be gathered from a comparison of certain passages in the Acts of the Apostles and in Paul's own writings.

Though addressed to Christians at Ephesus, and principally intended for Gentile converts, yet this epistle seems to have been designed, as it is adapted, for general use in the existing churches of Christ; and, of course, as containing a revelation and exposition of Divine truth, from the pen of an Apostle, it must hold a permanent place among the authoritative records of Christianity.

Its general scope, plainly, is to impart to a flourishing community of believers, the highest and most enlarged views

of the blessing of redemption, as well as to stir them up to adorn their profession, by a faithful and zealous discharge of their duty in the different relationships of life, and to prepare them for the inheritance of the Saints in Glory.

The first two verses contain the Apostle's salutation, and to this, let us, for the remainder of this lecture, confine your attention.

He begins by setting forth his name and office, to engage at once our respectful attention, and our reverent submission to what he is about to declare.

"Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God."

I. We have here to enquire, particularly and definitely, what was included in the apostolic office to which Paul lays claim. The original appointment and commission of the twelve apostles is thus related by the Evangelist Mark: "And Jesus goeth up into a mountain and called to him whom he would, and they came to him; and he ordained twelve that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sickness, and to cast out devils."* In Luke's gospel this remarkable transaction is thus described: "And he called his disciples, and of them he chose twelve; whom also he named Apostles."† From these and other passages in the Gospels, we learn the following facts as to the apostolic office during Christ's ministry on earth. (1.) Jesus himself chose or selected the twelve from among his disciples. They had a direct and immediate call. (2.) It was He who gave them the distinctive name *Apostles*.

*Mark iii. 13.

†Luke vi. 13.

(3.) He ordained them for these duties, viz: to be with him and attend upon him; to preach the Kingdom of God, or that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, in other words, to introduce the Gospel; and lastly, to heal the sick and cast out devils. (4.) Their endowments, wherewith he gifted them for their work, were, first, authority founded on their commission; second, power to heal sickness and cast out devils; and third, Providential support by the way.

When our Saviour was about to leave the world, and ascend visibly to Heaven, he renewed his commission to them all, except Judas, (whose place was afterwards filled up by the Divine call alighting on Matthias);* and he gave them the assurance of an additional special endowment in the full gift of the Holy Ghost—the Comforter—who should ‘teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them. (See John xiv. 26; xv. 26-27; xvi. 7. Acts i. 1-9.) That assurance was fulfilled, when, on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit, most significantly and most beautifully emblemized by ‘the mighty rushing wind,’ and ‘the cloven tongues, like as of fire,’ descended upon each of them, and ‘they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.’†

One thing included in the Apostolic office was to bear witness of the resurrection of Christ, (See Acts i. 22; ii. 32.) so that no one could well undertake its duties who had it not in his power to give evidence as to that fact, with-

* Acts i. 23-26.—Comp. Lev. xvi. 8. † Acts ii. 1-14.

out which, indeed, Christianity were, as a religion, vain, and to be rejected.* On that fact the hope of all believers in every age of the church depends.† Paul could bear testimony to this fact, for on his way to Damascus, on the occasion of his conversion, he beheld the risen and exalted Redeemer and heard his voice.‡ Hence, in dealing with the Corinthians, he says: ‘Am I not an Apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ Our Lord?’ But this was not a distinctive mark, for Our Lord ‘was seen of above five hundred brethren at once,’ and by women as well as men. It was, however, an essential requisite, and Paul was not wanting in it; for, he says, ‘last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.’

But that which ‘was absolutely and essentially distinctive of the apostolic office, was a commission from Christ to declare by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and consequently infallibly the Gospel of the Grace of God. In this lay the apostolic character. Apostles were enabled to give proof that they possessed this commission by the power they had of working miracles, and of conferring miraculous gifts on whomsoever they laid their hands. By the ‘laying on of their hands’ they could confer special gifts of the Holy Ghost. The essential gift was infallible inspiration consequent on the commission of Christ; and to this, therefore, the distinctive peculiarity of the apostolic office is to be ascribed.§

Now Paul had the most complete warrant for asserting this commission. Never was there a more wondrous display of

*1 Cor. xv. 14. †1 Pet. i. 3. ‡Acts xxvi. 16. §See Appendix B.

Divine power than that which converted Saul into Paul—‘the blasphemer, the injurious, the persecutor,’ into ‘the chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ before the Gentiles and Kings and the Children of Israel.’ At his conversion he received his commission, direct from Heaven, from the mouth of the Master, written not with pen and ink, but by the Holy Ghost. This he was everywhere able to establish, first to the satisfaction of the other Apostles who added the seal of their *ordination*,* and afterwards wherever he went. By the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and by the power of God resting on him, he was able to attest his apostleship in every place. Writing to the Romans, he says: “for I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders by the power of the Spirit of God.”† Again to the Corinthians, he says: “truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders, and mighty deeds.”‡

Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, then, infallibly guided by the Holy Ghost, speaks to the Ephesians, in this, his epistle, with Divine authority. The truths he declares or unfolds are the doctrines of Christ. The words he uses are not the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. These truths of Christ, these words of the Holy Ghost, are holy oracles. They form part of the Word of God to man, which liveth and abideth for ever. They bind us, in their application to us, as much as they

*Acts xiii. †Rom. xv. 18. ‡2 Cor. xii. 12.

did the Ephesians. We are brought into contact with the mind and will of God. By this Gospel we shall be judged. It must prove either a savour of life unto life to us, or a savour of death unto death. With what reverence ought we to bow before the Word of God! Let us remember that the things of God are hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes; and let us prayerfully commit ourselves to the Divine guidance of the Holy Spirit, speaking to us by his inspired Apostle!

Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ ‘by the will of God.’

II. The principal idea contained in this clause is seen in the introduction of his Epistle to the Galatians, where it is expressed in full: ‘Paul an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead.’ The idea may be said to include two things, principally: First, that he derived his commission and authority directly from God. He had not been chosen by men, nor even appointed as Matthias was, but was chosen and set apart *immediately* by God, as is evident from the narrative. Second, that he obtained his qualifications for his office in an extraordinary manner. He had not qualified himself, any more than he had chosen his office. Nor was it by a course of training on the part of other apostles. On the contrary he appears, almost suddenly, endowed with gifts and graces, with knowledge and power, fitting him for his high vocation.

There is a *peculiar* emphasis, however, in Paul’s saying, ‘by the will of God.’ It was in spite of himself, so to speak,

and contrary to the natural course of things. Moses was called forth to deliver his people from bondage 'by the will of God,' but then he was, heart and soul, anxious for that deliverance. David was raised up to the throne 'by the will of God,' but he was a man after God's own heart. The other Apostles were called 'by the will of God,' but they were chosen from among those who were disciples. In the case of Paul we see the will of God casting ordinary rules to the winds, and, in contravention of the natural course of things, making him an Apostle. He was as one born out of due course. He was miraculously called. He was miraculously endowed. In respect of these things there was a specialty in Paul's case, which gives a peculiar emphasis to the words 'by the will of God.'

The Apostle, therefore, might speak with a full consciousness of his commission and authority from God. He had been appointed to his apostleship by a signal and glorious exercise of the will of God. His call was clear and emphatic. He was deeply impressed with the responsibility of exercising his apostolic office. He felt "woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel. Necessity is laid upon me." He had nothing to boast of in himself. It was 'the will of God.'

And in their separate spheres may not all true believers, all who by grace are called and chosen and faithful, feel the binding, constraining influence of the 'will of God.' If for your special work or duty you have any evidence of a divine call, then are you not bound to regard yourselves the servants of God? Each of you, in that case, may say, 'by the grace

of God I am what I am; by the will of God I am engaged in my special vocation. Although I may not have authority infallibly to bind the consciences and instruct the hearts of others, yet I have authority for doing my duty and fulfilling a trust, in my own sphere,—I am the Lord's servant. Whatsoever, therefore, I do by word or deed, I do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him.' This were an animating thought—an inspiring feeling. Oh that each of us would act on this principle, at all times !

To the Saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.

III. The most of the epistles of the New Testament are addressed to believers, to the Saints and the faithful in Christ Jesus.

These expressions are not to be taken in a loose manner, as if descriptive merely of outward calling and outward membership in the church. They imply an effectual work of grace already begun. The term *Saints* was indeed applied to the Israelites, to denote their outward ceremonial and covenant relationship to God. They were separated, and so in that sense 'Holy,' or 'Saints.' But in the New Testament the word means 'cleansed,' or purified, and it includes two things: (1.) deliverance from the guilt of sin by means of the atonement of Christ and inward purification from the power of sin, and (2.) consecration to the services and glory of God. The Saints at Ephesus were reconciled by the blood of Christ—they had experienced the 'washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' They were, moreover, a peculiar

people—separated from the world—consecrated to God. They are also styled ‘faithful.’ The expression here means just ‘full of faith,’ or exercising faith in a steadfast and persevering manner.

Those whom he calls faithful he also calls Saints. He who is a believer is also a Saint, and no one else. It is ‘in Christ’ that they are said to be Saints and faithful. This expresses the union subsisting between them as members, and Christ as the head. It is only ‘in Christ’ that any become ‘Saints;’ but let us notice how this is brought about. It is just simply by believing. There is no other way to us intelligible, by which union with Christ is effected. This is where the mystery of salvation comes in contact with human means and personal duty. Believers realize their union with Christ, whether in its privileges or fruits, only by faith.

Thus, when we ask you whether the appellation here given by the Apostle to the Ephesians would apply to yourselves—when we inquire ‘are *you* Saints, or faithful, or in Christ;’ it will resolve itself into the practical inquiry, ‘are you looking to Jesus for your salvation, are you trusting to him, are you submitting to the righteousness of God in him?’ If so, then you are Saints already, and you will become more and more practically and manifestly Saints. You are reconciled, you are renewed, you are God’s people. Much may yet have to be done; you may only have entered on your course; but, blessed be God! ‘in Christ,’ includes everything. He is the Alpha, and will be the Omega, of your salvation.

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.—Verse 2nd.

IV. Paul prays for 'grace and peace' to his readers, and in this prayer he comprehends all blessings. The 'grace,' or free unmerited favour of God, is the source of all real good to fallen man. It was this which prompted the plan of salvation. It is this which confers its actual enjoyment. 'Peace,' according to the usage of the word, means well-being in general. It includes peace of conscience, peace at home and abroad, in sickness and health, in life and in death.

These all embracing gifts Paul asks from 'God the Father, and from Our Lord Jesus Christ.' He recognized both with equal reverence and gratitude. Christ was as much an object of worship as the Father. He looked up to his Master as God, and in him he found grace and peace himself, which he desires, therefore, for those in whom he felt so deep and sacred an interest.

God is styled 'Our Father,' not simply because He is our Creator, or because He is the Father of spirits, but chiefly because he has adopted us by his spirit into a new and permanent relationship; and we become his children by and through the grace of the new covenant. Again Jesus Christ is Our Lord, although in a more familiar view, our elder brother. Both things consist and harmonize; such is the marvellous wisdom displayed in the plan of our recovery. 'Lord' denotes possession or property. In this sense 'Jesus is made of God both Lord and Christ.*' He is *the* Lord—the Lord of

*Acts ii. 36.

Lords—the Lord God. He has dominion assigned to him—even the Divine right of dominion—that at his name every knee should bow, and every tongue confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Although he made himself a servant—was made under the law—yet being exalted he was made ‘Lord of All.’ He was not merely man, and a sufferer for the redemption of his church, but he was also God, even the mighty God and the Prince of Peace. Hence having Divine perfection, infinite goodness and infinite power, he possesses a complete right to the universal sovereignty of heaven and earth; and this right, after triumphantly finishing his work of humiliation for sinners, is openly brought forward,—this claim is fully asserted.

No one, it is said, can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.* It is a confession which, when genuine, implies a *recognition* of the Divine Sovereignty as wielded by Jesus, and of the Divine glory and goodness, as they shine forth in his person and work. It is a confession which, when genuine, implies an *acquiescence* in this sovereignty, and a personal submission to his rule in and over the mind. Blessed, surely, is *His* empire, for it is that of truth and love! The Kingdom of God is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. This is Christ’s Kingdom.

These two ‘requisites’ can be supplied by no human effort. It is not ‘in man’ to see the divine excellence of Jesus Christ. Seeking ‘great things’ for themselves, most are discontented with the ‘things of Christ’s kingdom.’ It is not ‘in man’ to

* Cor. 1 xii. 3.

submit to the 'Lordship' of Christ, without a new 'nature. The spirit of selfishness is utterly opposed to the spirit of the gospel. Submission to Christ is, on the contrary, the surest means to happiness, whether in our personal, domestic, or social capacity.

Do you thus—intelligently, sincerely, and practically—call Jesus Lord? Then are you within the Kingdom of Grace. and the Peace of God shall reign in your hearts.—AMEN.

LECTURE II.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—3.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

The Epistle to the Ephesians is one of the most sublime portions of God's Word. The subjects introduced in it are on the highest elevation of revealed knowledge; yet, as we shall see, the application of the loftiest of them is level with the relations in which man stands on earth, with the cares belonging to his present lot, and with the deepest aspirations and demands of his spiritual nature. The language, too, in which these transcendent doctrines is set forth is beautifully striking,—forming, as it were, 'apples of gold in pictures of silver.' And, as gold is capable of being beaten out to an almost indefinite extent, so it has happened that numerous volumes of human writing have been evolved out of single topics or texts contained in this epistle. Every word breathes of a pure and heavenly atmosphere; and the intelligent,

though humble, Christian needs no other evidence of the Apostolic, that is the Divine origin of this Scripture, than what lies conspicuous on its face. 'It reveals itself as the work of the Holy Ghost, as clearly as the stars declare their maker to be God.'

On entering this field of Scriptural study we have not to pass through any dry and barren track ere we come to rich and nourishing pasture; or, to vary the figure in reference to our present subject of discourse, no sooner have we set foot within this recess of the Temple of Divine Truth than we hear the praises of God lifted high by the voice of Faith and Love, as the Apostle, in name of the Church, exclaims 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.'

I. We have, here, a Doxology—most illustrious of the perfections of God—in which all can unite, both men and angels.

The praise which the Apostle expresses in our text is, we have reason to believe and as far as we know, the very highest eulogy which can be rendered to Jehovah. It extols the grace and mercy which prompted and carried out the work of salvation—God's most honourable work; and, as it offers up blessing for blessing, and casts the crowns which his unmerited love bestows at the foot of his Sovereign Throne, it must surely be the most acceptable praise of which we can form any conception.

As God created all things for his own pleasure, and as

he governs all things according to the counsel of his own will, so we can understand how that there is no spot in this universe which does not, in some way, contribute praises to his name.

The Psalmist in the 148th Psalm calls upon all the creatures of God to praise his name, 'for it is excellent.' In a certain sense they do so by the very terms of their existence. Nature, in all its departments, obeys the primitive laws assigned to it; and, saving for the blight of sin, under which the whole creation groaneth, God might still look down on the works of his hands and pronounce them all to be 'very good.' The swallow builds the same sort of nest as at the first, the flowers throw upwards the same beauteous tints, and the stars move on in the same courses. Without speech or language, or voice of articulate, conscious praise, all nature resounds with one harmonious anthem, celebrating the Wisdom, the Power, and the Goodness of its Almighty Creator. But surely higher than this rises the praise—conscious, intelligent, and hearty—which God's own redeemed can offer when they 'bless the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ.'

When we come to consider how it stands in the moral and spiritual world, embracing all who are rational and voluntary agents under God, there are three states which present themselves to view, in which such beings exist, and in each of them God in a certain sense is glorified.

In that gloomy region of dark despair, which is the abode of evil angels, and of lost souls, a deep and awful note of

praise may be heard, reluctantly drawn out by an inflexible law and a tormenting conscience, as each miserable tenant confesses the justice of his doom. There is no escaping the presence of God. 'If I make my bed in Hell behold thou art there.' 'The darkness hideth not from Thee.' The thought of this subject is too dismal and too mysterious for us to fathom. Yet the Scripture assures us that from the waste howling abyss of misery God does recover a certain revenue of praise.* His glorious justice, as well as Sovereign power, are there displayed and acknowledged; and whilst in Heaven the angels say, 'Holy, Holy, Holy,' the wicked must ever reply, 'Righteous, Righteous, Righteous,' is the Lord God of Hosts. Oh how different is *that* praise and how much less pleasing to God, than the joyful and heartfelt 'blessing' of each redeemed sinner!

In the state on earth we contemplate a mixed and perplexing condition, in which it were difficult for us to say, from our own knowledge, whether there is more good or evil. But over all God presides, the Sovereign king, who by his all-controlling hand directs at once the falling of a sparrow and the affairs of nations. 'Is there evil in the city,'—is there war, famine, pestilence,—'and the Lord hath not done it?' 'He hath made all things for himself, yea even the wicked for the day of evil;' and out of evil God makes good to arise, and compels the very wrath of man to praise him. God's Providence is most wise and holy and powerful, and all nations and all individuals that ever existed and all events

* Rom. ix. 17.

that ever happened shall, in the day of the Lord, proclaim the righteousness of his rule, 'Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are all Thy ways, Thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? for Thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest.* But higher than this is the blessing of our text!

Ascend we now into Heaven and contemplate the Holy Angels—those Sons of God who remained in the house when others forsook it—those 'morning stars' that sang together and shouted for joy when the Almighty laid the foundation of the earth and spread out the Heaven as a curtain! These all praise the wonders of creative power and admire the goodness of Him who is the 'Father of lights with whom is no variability or shadow of turning.' Their service is surely sublime, their adoration most exalted and their joys most complete. But high, and doubtless, most acceptable to God as their praise is, higher still and more acceptable is that of the Redeemed Church. The angels, as they never sinned, never needed salvation; as they never deserved wrath, so they cannot be the objects of mercy strictly so called. They are represented as 'desiring to look unto these things;' and when they would strike their harps to the noblest and most glorifying song in Heaven, they must even borrow the new song of the ransomed—the song not of Creation, with all its display of skill and goodness, but that of Redemption with its far more amazing display of mercy and grace. In the vision which John saw of

* Rev. xv. 3-4.

Heaven and its occupants,* recorded in the Apocalypse, those who stood immediately around and next to the Throne were the representatives of the Church—the four beasts or living creatures and the four and twenty elders—and around these were the angels. The position of these heavenly worshippers is thus remarkable and significant. Not less so is their praise, both for its matter and manner. First of all, the Elders and the living creatures—the Church in glory—sings a new song ‘Worthy art thou . . . for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth.’ Then the angels that stood around (as if in an attitude according with their office under the gospel, for ‘are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?’) in number ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands take up the strain, saying with a loud voice ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing.’ Then, last of all, comes a universal burst ‘from every creature which is in heaven and on earth and under the earth,’ as if all the universe of God were stirred to its heart, and, vibrating with a thrill of sacred devotion, had reached the utmost height of praise and worship, whilst it adores a Redeeming God and exclaims ‘Blessing and honour and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the Throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.’

* Rev. iv. and v

Is not that the identical praise which is expressed in our text? Is not the Apostle teaching us here, the new song of Heaven? Oh that, from a sense of God's mercy to us, from a felt relish in the service, and with clean hands and a pure heart, we could take our place in this recess of the temple, and say with him, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ'!

II. Let me ask you, in the second place, to observe carefully the Title under which the Apostle blesses God, viz., 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' This is an expression of frequent occurrence and of most important signification, in the writings of the New Testament. It is a favourite expression with Paul. Besides our text we may instance in Rom. xv. 5, where he says 'Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus; 6. That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;' and in Eph. v. 20, where he says 'Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

It is evidently, in the reckoning of the Apostle, a matter of prime importance, that when we attempt to praise or glorify or give thanks to God, the relation which he bears to our Lord and Saviour should be recognized and felt. That relation consists in His being at once *the God* and *the Father* of Jesus Christ; and as believers recognize in Jesus Christ at once their *Lord* and their elder *Brother*, as well as Redeemer, the

way of approach is safely and securely laid and they may 'draw nigh with true hearts and in full assurance of faith.'

The importance of thus recognizing the relation of God to our Saviour may be gathered from the fact that when about to leave this earth, after his resurrection, Jesus himself thus instructed and comforted his disciples—addressing Mary Magdalene, he thus charged her 'Go to my brethren and say unto them I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God.' This truth—this beautiful, sublime, and comforting thought *He* left with his Church as the elder brother's parting legacy.

The disciple—the true believer—stands to Christ in the relation of at once a faithful subject and a younger brother. This relation in each case is indissoluble, and brings together into one all the members of the family. But God above is the God and Father of Jesus Christ. This relation is also indissoluble. He is God's Christ. He is the Father's Eternal Son. Must not the two relations form a necessary third equally indissoluble? and thus believers—disciples—rejoice in God even the Supreme as at once *their* God and their Father? Or shall we say that this relationship into which believers are brought to God the Father is substantially and truly identical with that in which Jesus Christ stands? At all events He is the link or bond by which 'many sons and daughters' are brought unto God and established in 'the house.'*

A nearer and more familiar relationship to Christ is supposed to be first formed; a higher and more august is at the

*See Appendix.—*Adoption.*

same time secured. We are not called on to deal with God, in the first instance, as the absolute Jehovah or to approach to him in any ease in our own right or name. But coming to Christ, as sinners yet in faith, and then through him to God—our prayers, our praises, our whole service ascends to his Father and to ours, to his God and to ours.

That this is not a mere idea or one that has no practical significance might be shewn from the most familiar experiences in life. Do you not consider that the relatives of those who are related to you are from this very circumstance rendered accessible at all times and more particularly when any emergency arises, and you need their help? Nay suppose you could claim with the Sovereign a connection of only a very distant sort, through some one intermediate between you with whom you are more nearly connected, and that you desired for some purpose to engage the Sovereign's interest in your behalf, would not the fact of such a connection at once embolden you in your errand and form a prevailing motive on the part of the Sovereign to admit you into his presence and grant your request?

In like manner to illustrate things divine by things human, when you are animated with the Spirit of praise or the spirit of prayer—when you either come with your offering to God or would secure from God the desire of your hearts—then the fact that He is the God and Father of your Lord Jesus Christ must both encourage you and must move towards you the Divine regards and render you acceptable. Your prayers, your praises, are accepted in the Beloved. 'There is one God

and one Mediator between God and man—the man Christ Jesus.’ ‘By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.’

III. In the third place, I would direct your attention to the reason why the Apostle blesses God. ‘*Who hath blessed us.*’

This is the language of believing persuasion, if not of realized experience. The Apostle rejoices in the fact that he and all the household of faith have already been made the objects of God’s favour and grace, and the recipients of His loving Fatherly gifts. It is not by simply contemplating the character of God in itself, or the manifestation of his love in Christ, or the ample provision of blessings held forth in the Gospel, that the eulogy of our text is drawn forth. This is all that the Angels can attain to in their praise of God. There is an additional element in the case of redeemed sinners, which gives unction and fervour to their acknowledgments. There is the praise of gratitude superadded to the praise of admiration; and where these two are combined, as in the case of such as have ‘tasted and known’ that God is gracious, there the feelings of dutiful worship will be most animated as well as most sincere.

The praise of our text comes from minds persuaded of the grace of God, from hearts already blessed of God. It comes from souls justified and renewed. It swells higher and higher as the consciousness of Jehovah’s goodness and grace increases. Some confidence or assurance is necessary to this praise. The stronger the confidence, the more fervent the praise. If you have enjoyed some sure persuasion of an interest in the salva-

tion of Christ, if you have in some degree reaped the blessed fruits of his death and atonement, if you can lay your hand on this and the other evidence of your calling and election, you will then most readily and heartily join with the Apostle, for then you can truly say, 'Blessed be God who hath blessed us.' On the contrary if still you know not but that the wrath of God abides upon you for your sins, and that you are still under the curse, instead of venturing to praise God you will feel only the movements of distrust. It is only when you have passed from darkness to light and from under the curse to be under the blessing, that you have reason for yourself to bless God. There is indeed abundant reason and ground for admiring and praising God as 'declared' in the Gospel in the person and work of Emmanuel. The manifestation of God's love in Christ to sinners, even whilst still sinners, the reconciliation effected by the sacrifice of His Son, the free and unconditional offer of all the blessings of redemption to the lost and perishing, are surely fitted in themselves to draw the wondering gaze of all, and especially present aspects of God's character, which we would think every trembling and despairing sinner might rejoice to behold. The very sight of God's love in Christ, and a glimpse into the storehouse of his blessing, is the first thing that leads to such a frame of mind as will beget true praise. If there be any who cannot yet bless God because he *hath* blessed them, let them gaze on the cross of Christ; let them contemplate there the glory of God's nature and more particularly His mercy; let them reflect that if they are only willing and believing, they shall taste and see that God is good, and

let them open wide the door of their hearts that they may receive out of the fulness of Christ grace for grace, then are they in a position to join at once in such praise as the Apostle here utters in the name of the Saints and faithful at Ephesus. Let them advance in the exercises of faith and holiness and they will more and more be impelled to such praise. 'Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord; his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.'*

IV. In the fourth place the Apostle describes the nature and extent of the blessing for which he praises God. The expression 'with all spiritual blessings' would be better translated 'with all spiritual blessing'—the word being in the singular in the original. The idea is a comprehensive one; it being evidently intended not merely to indicate a diversity or multiplicity of blessings which as believers we receive from God, but also to denote the totality of such blessings in a single word. It is 'the blessing' of the covenant of Grace in all its parts—salvation from its origin to its consummation, for which Paul here blesses God, in the name of each true believer. The various privileges, honours, and possessions of a spiritual nature which God confers on us in Christ, all hang together—one is not without the rest—and all together make up one blessing. He who has received a part may be sure of the whole. He who is conscious of one Grace of the Spirit, no matter which it may be in the order of things, may rest satisfied that God has blessed him with 'all spiritual blessing,' and

*Hos. vi. 3.

that in due course, sooner or later he will experience the abundant goodness of God in every particular belonging to his eternal salvation.

There are two senses in which the term 'spiritual' may be understood, as descriptive of the *nature* of the blessing. It may either be taken as referring to that department of our being which is undoubtedly chiefly affected by the blessings of salvation, namely our spirit or soul; or it may be taken as referring to the source or origin of these blessings, namely that Holy Spirit of God, who takes of the things that are Christ's and bestows them on us. In the former of these senses the blessings of salvation would be extolled on the ground that they do not principally or mainly refer to the body and its necessities and wants which are of a lower and more earthly character, but to the soul or spirit which is the nobler part of us and whose wants and necessities are of a vastly higher order. This is indeed true. The blessings which the gospel brings to us are such as affect our understanding, our conscience, our affections and our will. They are intended and fitted to bless our souls, in all these different modes in which they live and have their being. Are we intelligent and reasoning spirits? The Gospel brings to us light and truth on the most important of all subjects, setting us right in our judgments in regard to God and ourselves, pointing out to us what are our highest obligations and our noblest pursuits in life. Are we endowed with conscience?—with a faculty of discerning between good and evil—with a moral sense, which acts the part of a judge within us, and visits us either with approbation or disapproba-

tion, accusing or excusing, praising or blaming? The Gospel brings peace to our souls 'through the blood of Christ,' and in place of an evil, tormenting, dead conscience, gives us 'a good conscience,' and one, too, that is void of offence both toward God and toward man. Are we beings possessed of desires, emotions, affections? Do our spirits within us stir with loves and hates, with joys and sorrows, hopes and fears? The Gospel directs our hearts, purifying us from selfishness and sin, setting our affections on just and proper objects, and regulating all our passions according to wisdom and truth. And thus, in short, as moral and spiritual beings, God may be said to bless us with spiritual blessing when we are induced and enabled to use our powers and faculties of soul or mind for those high and holy purposes for which they were originally made in the image of God, and for which we are 'created anew in Christ Jesus.'

But the word *spiritual* generally describes that which is produced by the Spirit of God. 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.' It leads our minds to that blessed Divine agent as the author of a gracious work in the soul of each redeemed sinner, when he comes and takes up his abode there and produces all the peaceable fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of God. In this view, which is the true meaning of the passage, we are not called on to make any distinction between our souls and bodies, as if the blessings of salvation affected the former only, and not at all the latter. The 'blessing' is spiritual because it comes from, and is applied by, the Holy Spirit of God; and

we are blessed just as we are and in whatever way we live and move and have our being. We are brought body as well as soul under the blessing. We are justified, sanctified, glorified, soul, body and spirit. The body participates in the redemption of Christ. It also will at last become a spiritual body—adapted to and fitted for the exercises of a perfected soul. Even now it is the temple of the Holy Ghost;* and, as affected directly or indirectly by his indwelling presence, it is less or more a spiritual body. Everything is here included, whether it relate to that nobler and higher part—the soul, or to that gross and earthly tabernacle—the body, provided only it come from the Spirit of God, whose nature is holy and whose work must, also, be holy.

In the succeeding portion of the chapter the Apostle specifies in detail the chief things included in this general description ‘all spiritual blessing.’ These things we shall have occasion to dwell upon as we proceed in our exposition.

Meanwhile, let us ask, what can be so desirable as to have a right to such all comprehending blessedness? By the gospel, received and obeyed, you are certainly invested with a title ‘to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away.’ ‘All things are your’s and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.’ All good now—all glory hereafter! How important is it to have grace begun and to be able to say ‘he hath blessed us!’

V. Let me, now, briefly explain the phrase ‘in heavenly places.’

I cannot dwell on all the different interpretations which have been assigned to this expression—some referring it to the nature of the blessing—some to the heaven of glory—some to the visible Church on earth, &c. You will observe that the word 'places' is not in the original, which has induced some to translate the word by the general phrase 'in the heavenlies.' I like this translation, as it seems to me the best that can be hit upon to bring out the idea of the Apostle and the mind of the Spirit. The adjective here used occurs in six passages in the New Testament, besides this epistle, and the exact phrase of our text occurs in four other places in this epistle. The idea of locality will not suit the most of these places, and the idea of 'things' would be tautological. The idea that will suit all the passages and which is required by the exigencies of any one of them, is that which ought to be preferred. Now that idea is the conception of a condition, state, character, relationship, different from any other, heavenly and divine, in its origin and end.

If you direct attention to ch. ii., 6, you will see at once that 'the heavenlies' exist on earth. It is there said by the Apostle, with reference to the *present* state of himself and other believers, 'and hath raised us up together and made us to sit together in *the heavenlies* in Christ Jesus.' It is plain that he there speaks of a privilege which pertains to believers on earth. If you consider the passage, ch. vi., 12, where believers are said to wrestle against spiritual wickedness in 'high places,' that is, in 'the heavenlies,' you will see that the term cannot mean 'the heaven of absolute holiness and perfection,'

for there no evil can enter. Thus locality is excluded from the idea. The notion that 'in the heavenlies' means in heavenly *things* is out of the question, since the Apostle has before expressed this by the phrase 'with all spiritual blessing.' There remains, therefore, the view we have adopted, that 'in the heavenlies' means that Divinely appointed condition or state into which all God's people are brought, in which they are now, and shall be for ever.

The word 'heaven' is not confined to the abode of the glorified saints, although there is such a *place*, which by way of pre-eminence is called 'heaven.' In regard to its essential characteristics it cannot be said of heaven 'lo here or lo there;' it consists of 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.' Believers are exhorted to have 'their conversation in heaven.' They are said to be citizens of heaven.* The Kingdom of God is come down to the earth, and He dwells with men. He will afterwards receive his people into glory.

In this sense, then, we would understand the words. 'In heavenly places,' or rather 'in the heavenlies,' just relates to that state into which believers are brought by the gospel. It may have some inclusive reference to the church on earth, or to the local abode of believers at last; but the idea is wider and more spiritual than that of any visible association or community of professing Christians, and than that of any location whatsoever in any part of the universe. It is not, we should say, the *visible* church which is denoted by 'the heavenlies,' but rather the *invisible* church. It is not time, but eternity;

* Phil. iii. 10.

not a place, but a condition; not simply an outward blessed sphere of existence, but along with that the spiritual presence and enjoyment of God. In the state denoted by the expression, believers are brought into communion with the whole family of God's redeemed, they are associated with the whole 'cloud of witnesses' belonging to the Old Testament, they are affiliated with the whole brotherhood of the New Testament, they are united with the whole company of God's people living in their time or who shall afterwards live. Time and place are out of reckoning. 'In the heavenlies' denotes that state, condition, region, where the rays of God's love shine—where the streams of Christ's sacrifice flow—and where the fruits of God's spirit are produced. Of this blessed reality Christ is the efficient cause. The enjoyment of 'the heavenlies,' nay even the possibility of this enjoyment, depends on *his* vicarious interposition between God and man. So the Apostle teaches when he shews

VI. In the last place, the Person in whom we are blessed.

'In Christ Jesus.'

Let this be the practical application of our present lecture, to urge on you the necessity of being united to Christ by faith. Out of Christ, away from God, aloof from the Spirit! In Christ, blessed of God, the abode of the Spirit! Trusting to Christ you are 'in Christ.' Disbelieving his gospel, refusing to submit to his righteousness, or consenting not to be 'debtor to grace' you are out of Christ. 'In him' by faith you become related to him by the best, the truest, the most spiritual, and the most enduring of relationships. He is your

elder brother, and through him God is your God and Father. Out of him, by unbelief, you are still in your sins—under the curse—exposed to Hell and everlasting wrath. In him you are blessed of God, the Supreme God, the Father Almighty, and that ‘with all spiritual blessing’ in ‘the heavenlies.’ Out of him you are miserable in life, and in death without hope, and, worst of all, exposed to the final sentence of justice: ‘Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’

NE FIAT DEUS!

LECTURE III.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—4.

“According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

In the previous verse the Apostle, in the name of all believers, blesses God for ‘all spiritual blessing, in the heavenlies in Christ.’ In this he teaches us to trace that blessing, in its entirety, to the fountain head, to the electing love of God, which is indeed the first part of the blessing itself, but beyond or higher than which we cannot go. ‘According’ says he ‘as he hath chosen us.’

The Israelites of old redeemed from Egypt’s bondage and securely settled in Canaan—that ‘pleasant land, that goodly heritage of the hosts of nations’*—were taught beforehand by Moses to ascribe the blessedness of their lot neither to their number nor to their righteousness, but to the mere love and mercy of God, ‘because the Lord loved them, and because he

* Jer. iii. 19.

would keep the oath which he had sworn unto their fathers.* Now 'the heavenlies' is the true, the spiritual Canaan, of which the other was only a worldly type. It is the 'invisible church' of all ages, the region where the favour of God shines as the light of his countenance, where the streams of the river of the water of life flow, and where the fruits of the Holy Spirit are produced. And just as Israel, in the possession of the promised land, could trace that gift, with all its blessings, to nothing else, in justice, but God's free choice of them to be his peculiar people, so the church of God, and each redeemed sinner therein, must in all truth as well as humility, ascribe the blessings of salvation, in whole and part, to God's electing love. Following the example of the inspired Apostle, than whom there can be no better or higher in such a matter, each believer in the enjoyment of spiritual mercies, is led to contemplate the original purposes of a Sovereign God, not with the common feelings of aversion and distrust, but with the feelings of comfort and satisfaction.

In endeavouring to set before you the truth contained in this text, in dependence on the blessing of God's Spirit, I would direct your attention to

I. *What* the Apostle here assigns as the *cause, origin, or fountain* of all spiritual blessing in the heavenlies, 'according as he hath chosen us.'

II. *How* this cause comes into being and operation; 'in him,' i. e., in Christ.

III. *When*, viz: 'before the foundation of the world.'

* Deut. vii. 7-8; ix. 4

IV. *Why*, or for what end, viz: 'that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.'

I. *First*, then, let us consider the cause, fountain, origin of the blessings of salvation, '*according as he hath chosen us.*'

The blessings which we enjoy, the Apostle affirms, are in consequence of God's having chosen us, that we might become partakers of them in all their extent and fulness. To this source alone are they to be traced.

The expression used scarcely needs explanation; but to exhibit as clearly as possible its import, let us turn to the scene where the twelve were ordained by our Lord. *That* was surely a most important step for the interests of his church, for which he was to lay down his life; and, in keeping with its momentous character we find it recorded that on the occasion of it, the Redeemer 'went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.* Behold the man, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead, after thus preparing himself, full of the Holy Ghost above measure, and still wet with the dews of the morning, proceed to exercise the Divine prerogative. Gathering around him his disciples—those who had become his followers and who hung on his lips for instruction—and exercising an unquestioned and unquestionable right, whilst he has his eye on the ends he wishes to accomplish and the best means for attaining them, we read 'of them *he chose* twelve whom also he named Apostles.' Who does not perceive that the choosing was just a selecting, of the few from among the many for the special purpose contemplated.

* Mark iii. 13. Luke vi. 12.

Thus is the meaning of the word exhibited in the case of the twelve. But Paul does not here refer to that act, as if he had said 'according as he hath chosen us Apostles,' for it is clear that he speaks in the name of all believers, not only the Ephesians, but others also in every country and age.

Conceive the church of God, gathered out of every kindred and people and nation and tongue, composed of such as have believed in Christ and walked in his footsteps, to be assembled together, and along side of this goodly company, the whole world of unbelieving and impenitent sinners, just as they shall be at the last day, the one part on the right hand and the other part on the left, the question suggested and at the same time answered by the Apostle is 'whence or how the unspeakable privilege which belongs to the former of these assemblies'? How comes it that the church of God's 'saints and faithful' thus stands distinguished from the ungodly world, in the blessings it enjoys, the favours reserved for it, and the eternal glory it shall inherit?

Now, 1st. It is a matter of fact concerning which this question is raised. Whatever may be the solution of the question, or difficulties connected with it, there is no denying or concealing the fact itself, that there has been, is and will be, a distinction among men—a difference—a separation—as respects their state and character before God, and their ultimate destiny. It is not more a fact, in particular, that there was an Abel and a Cain, that there was an ark to save eight souls, when the rest of mankind perished in the waters of the flood, that there was a Canaan and an Israel to inhabit it, while the

rest of the nations were left in heathenish darkness, that in the days of Christ and his Apostles, some of the Jews believed, but the rest were blinded, and that at last, for its rejection of Messiah, the nation was scattered, than it is, in general, that there has always been, and will always be, a true church of God, the members of which, fully known only to God, are blessed 'with all spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.' The fact itself is there and can be denied by none without not only shutting the Bible, but also every other faithful, though it may be uninspired, account of the human race.

Now, 2nd. This fact cannot be accounted for by any reference to individual or personal distinctions of character or worthiness.

That there are such distinctions or differences is at once admitted. Men are not born alike, nor are they nurtured in the same school. One may be, by nature fierce as the wild beast of the forest; another gentle as the lamb. One may be taught the arts of vice; another the lessons of honesty and virtue. But to attempt accounting for the grand spiritual distinction between Christ's Church and the ungodly world, by pointing to these natural and acquired differences of character, would be as irrational as it would be unscriptural. If there were any truth in such an account of the matter, it would not fail in any case. But it will be seen at once to be insufficient in the most obvious instances. That woman in the gospel, who had been 'a great sinner' so that it might be said 'seven devils had possession of her' you see at length enjoying the sunshine of a Saviour's countenance; but that youth, who to

an originally good disposition, had added an unexceptionable behaviour, so that when Jesus looked on him in the appreciation of natural excellence, he 'loved him,' is denied the blessings of the kingdom of heaven, when nigh unto it, and the last you see of him is when he 'goes away sorrowful.' Following Saul in his high-headed and strong-handed career, as he proceeds to Damascus, you might expect that for his violent rage against Christ and the Church he would have been left to bite his nails in despair for ever; but, instead, you find him on his way suddenly invested in the inheritance of the Saints. And what shall become of those whom he describes* as having been at Corinth, of the worst and vilest of mankind—fornicators, idolators, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners? 'Such' persons, he declares, were 'washed, were sanctified, were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'

But it has been said that the blessings of salvation are given to those who repent and believe; and that therefore, faith and repentance form the proper and only cause of any difference among men, beyond which we must not inquire. Who does not see the futility of this representation? Nay more, who does not see that this is a detraction from the revealed truth of God, and as such a pernicious view of the matter? It is like attempting to explain the growth of a tree by pointing to its leaves or its fruit. It is as if you were to trace a river to its source by sailing down its stream. Repentance is itself a

*1 Cor. vi. 9.

spiritual blessing, and so is faith. They are the gifts of Christ—the fruits of his Spirit. God says, ‘I will pour out the spirit of grace, and supplications, . . . and they shall *look* upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall *mourn*.’* Christ is ‘exalted a Prince and a Saviour to *give* repentance.’ † He is, also, both ‘the *author* and finisher of our faith.’ ‡ Where is boasting then? It is excluded. In the case of every true Christian it may be asked ‘who maketh thee to differ and *what* is there which thou hast not received.’

3. We reach the only *reasonable* account of the matter when we adopt the *Scriptural* explanation and ascribe ‘all spiritual blessing in the heavenlies’ as enjoyed by God’s people to *his* free-choosing love, ‘according as he hath chosen us.’

If you wished to explore the true source of some majestic river, which in its course beautifies and blesses the earth, as it flows through thousands of miles to the great ocean, you would not pause at some expanding lake which it fills and empties, nor ascend the route of some acceding tributary which helps to swell its volume, but keeping by the main channel, and leaving behind you the verdant plain and the smiling hamlet and the sleeping lake, you ascend high up the mountain steep, and there hidden in the cleft of the rock you discover the little bubbling spring that marks the origin and fountain and true rising place of that noble stream. So, taught and guided by God’s word—our only guide and teacher in such matters—when you would trace to its true fountain the stream of spiritual blessing which blesses you ‘in the hea-

*Zech. xii. 10. † Acts v. 31. ‡ Heb. xi. 2.

venlies,’ you pause not at any works or deeds of yours, you point not to any superiority natural or acquired over others, you fix not even on ‘faith’ and ‘repentance,’ (as if these all did not need to be accounted for!) but, in all humility, yet with all thankfulness, you rest in the electing love of God, as the original and actual cause of all. You hear Paul saying, and you must echo the acknowledgement, ‘according as he hath chosen us,’ whilst with John you gaze on that ‘pure river of water of life,* clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.’

II. We come now to consider the second thing in our text, viz: How this electing love of God—the cause or fountain of salvation—comes into being and operation, ‘*hath chosen us in him,*’ i. e., in Christ.

The Apostle does not forget to ascribe honour to his Divine Redeemer, in the second instance, whilst, in the first, he assigns to God-over-all the prime moving cause. The blessings wherewith God hath blessed and beautified the bride, which is the church, are laid out for her, and actually enjoyed by her, in her connection or union with her head or bridegroom, which is Christ.

It is a poor and miserable interpretation to put upon the words before us, to say that God hath chosen us because we are in Christ—thus making our actual union with Christ by faith the cause of his electing love. According to this view, God chooses sinners who themselves have first chosen Christ, and so by faith are ‘in him.’ We have seen already that faith

cannot be the cause of God's choosing us, for it is his own gift; neither, therefore, can the union, of which faith is the instrument or means, between the sinner and Christ, be its cause. It is, besides, contrary to the whole scope of the passage afterwards, which represents election as being 'according to the good pleasure of his will,' and 'according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself.'

We must endeavour to take hold of the Scriptural view of this matter. Approaching the subject reverently, and in submission to divine truth, let us inquire how, or in what sense, we are said to be 'chosen in Christ.' The purpose of God to save sinners of mankind could not take effect without the intervention of a Redeemer or Mediator. This purpose being conceived, to the honour of God's grace and love, it at once comes into being and operation in the second person of the Godhead, who is constituted Head and Representative of the church that is to be recovered and brought back into eternal glory. As Head or Representative Christ becomes *the* elect or chosen of God, of whom God declares: 'Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth;' and who himself, after having fulfilled his work to the full, shall say to his Father: 'Behold I and the children thou has given me.'

You must consider, then, that a virtual or representative union was formed by God, between sinners of mankind and Christ, when he purposed their salvation. A covenant was entered into between God, of the one part, and Christ constituted the head of the church and its representative, of the

other part. In terms of this covenant Christ was to do the will of God; i. e., fulfil the requirements of law, suffer its penalty and perform its duties, in room and stead of his people; and God, on his part, was to confer on them his spirit, work holiness in their natures, and at last receive them into eternal mansions. This, which is the true Scriptural view of the matter, shews that there was a real, but at the same time virtual, representative and federal union established between Christ and those to be redeemed, when God chose them and purposed their salvation. This union is antecedent to their actual and vital union by faith, and is evidently its source. "God gave a people to Christ in the covenant of redemption. Those included in this covenant, and because they are included in it—in other words, because they are 'in Christ' as their head and representative,*" receive 'all spiritual blessings in heavenly places.'

Thus are we chosen in Christ; and that we may illustrate the matter as nearly as we can by a Scriptural instance we point you to that other representation which was the source of our rejection and ruin. When our first father sinned and was driven from paradise, the whole race that was to come out of his loins sinned and fell in him. It might be said of this melancholy ruin, that 'in Adam' we were all rejected and cast forth from blessedness. He was the actual head and representative of the whole family, and by his ruin we were all driven forth. But another and far different headship now comes into view. It turns out that there is a second Adam—the Lord

*Hodge.

from heaven—and multitudes whom no man can number have been chosen in Him unto Eternal Life who were all dead in the first Adam. When God looked at the first Adam after his sin, his countenance was dark, and his curse was dreadful, as he doomed and drove out not him alone, or personally, but literally ‘all in him!’ When God looked on the second Adam he saw the shield of his salvation and the rod of his strength and prepared new blessings for his chosen whom he had chosen in him.

III. In the third place we are here taught *when* the election took place viz., ‘*before the foundation of the world.*’

This surely must be allowed to carry us far back, beyond the operation of human merit or agency. This, however, is the invariable representation of the matter. In the case where only two individuals are in the first instance concerned, Jacob and Esau, we are thus instructed by the Apostle in Rom. ix. 10,* ‘When Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand not of works, but of him that calleth) it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger, as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.’ But the statement of our text lifts our minds aloft, beyond the youth of hoary time, to where there was naught to mark its progress or record its age.

The expression ‘before the foundation of the world’ is of frequent occurrence. That is a beautiful and sublime refer-

*Rom. ix. 10-13.

ence which is made to Christ in the Book of Proverbs under the designation of Wisdom. 'The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.' 'Then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.'* As head and surety for his church, it was then that he was chosen; for we are said to be redeemed 'with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world.'† To us finite beings the changes and succession of created things and events mark the progress of time; but to God, who is infinite, there is no such thing as time, with its advance and career over one scene and then another. 'He lives in an eternal Now;' and hence this election is not a thing of time, and was before all time. Thus is Christ, the head and representative of his people, said to be 'the lamb slain from the foundation of the world'—for such was the purpose and plan of God, who sees the end from the beginning, and unto whom all his works are 'known from the beginning of the world.'

Again we find the expression used in a passage in our Lord's intercessory prayer, which bears closely on the present topic of discourse. 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst

me before the foundation of the world.’* And, in fine, we have the same truth set forth in that sublime account of the judgment day, in which our Saviour reveals the final issues, and the will of God in its ultimate decisions. ‘Then shall the King say unto them on the right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’†

Before ‘the ages’ began to run their course, ere ever the foundation of the world was laid, or any works of man were done at all—in that boundless eternity which had no beginning, and will have no end—God, the Supreme Intelligence and the Sovereign King, chose his Son for us, and chose us in him, that we, through him, might obtain everlasting life. Such is the acknowledgment which the inspired Apostle would put in the mouth of every true Christian.

1st. There is no room, then, for chance, uncertainty, or hazard. God’s plans are complete, and his purposes definite. Doubtless he has chosen, on the whole, the greatest good of the universe as his object; and, in ‘the election unto grace,’ only displays a part of his glorious and all-comprehending plan. But is not the certainty of the salvation of some, infinitely better, than leaving the matter in the hands of fallen men to incur the absolute certainty of the damnation of all.

2nd. Again we are taught in this not only God’s wisdom, but also his sovereignty. This, at least, is a precious truth—that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. What comfort, otherwise, would there be in contemplating a scene where sin

* John xvii. 24. † Mat. xxv. 34.

abounds and agents of darkness are abroad on the earth? But since God reigns, Sovereign over all, we know that all shall result in the triumphant victory of good over evil, in the end; and all enemies shall be put under his feet. Is it any drawback to the satisfaction with which we contemplate God's sovereignty, that we ourselves are actually at his disposal—are as the clay in the hands of the potter? Would any purchase 'the right or liberty absolute' to fashion his own course and his own destiny, by dethroning God and introducing eternal chaos? Surely not, on a deliberate view of the matter! Far better the humble and confiding faith of God's own children, who in their very faith and submission, with the fruits of these, have an evidence of their own calling and election.

IV. This suggests to us the fourth topic in our text, viz: *Why*, or for what end God hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world—'*that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.*'

It is an old saying: 'God does not find, but makes men holy.' It is evident, indeed, that none are chosen because they are holy or blameless, but some are chosen in order that they may become so. 'According to God's merey he hath saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' 'Christ gave himself for his church that he might sanctify and cleanse it, by the washing of water through the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.' This being the end of God's election of sinners of mankind, as far as *they*

are personally concerned—that they might become holy and without blame—this being the end, also, of the death of Christ, it may be at once seen how utterly hopeless is the case of every one apart from God's purpose and Christ's atonement. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.' 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.'

We are here taught, also, in what, perfection of character consists, viz., in love. When love is perfected then have we become holy and without blame. Love is the fulfilling of the law. Love to God in the supreme, and to our neighbour as ourselves, is the essence and end alike of all moral good. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him; for 'God is love.'

This excellence of personal character, which is the end of God's electing love, as well as of Christ's sacrifice, forms the only evidence we can obtain of our having been chosen in Christ. Many would fain open the 'book of life,' which, for the present God alone can open, and read the secret things belonging to him. They ought instead, to look into their own hearts and consider their own life. Is it a holy life? Have they loving hearts—that love the God of the Bible the God of Holiness and truth, as well as mercy and grace—that love others, even enemies and the unworthy, as well as friends and benefactors? Or is the heart hateful and hating impure, gross, and sensual in its desires, envious, malicious and selfish in its feelings? By these tests an approach may

be made to the knowledge of one's self and an estimate of our real state before God.

Let not this subject become distracting or distasteful to any. It is a sure mark of a rebellious spirit to kick at God's truth. There is no one called on to believe in his own rejection. On the contrary, it is wisest to take the more hopeful view of the matter, and rather to believe in one's election, if so be only that this encourages to the diligent use of means, and the prayerful waiting on God.

The command of the Gospel, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shall be saved,' may become in your case, O sinner! like the primeval command, 'Let there be light, and there was light;' the very word of the Almighty, by virtue of which he shall make you to 'pass from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.'

LECTURE IV.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—5-6.

“ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

“ To the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

As we proceed in the interpretation of this Epistle, we are met, verse after verse, by the same doctrine of Election or Predestination, in different aspects or bearings; and it may be well for us at this stage of our progress, to make one or two observations of a general kind, applicable to the whole subject. From the frequency with which the doctrine is introduced by the Apostle here, as well as from its frequency elsewhere in the Holy Scriptures, every intelligent inquirer will readily perceive its importance and value; and every serious and reflecting individual will feel that to pass it over in a superficial manner, or to regard it with suspicion or fear, would be to

detract from the 'whole counsel of God,' and to hide our eyes from the light of heaven. Now there are two classes of persons, who seem to occupy a false and dangerous position with respect to this doctrine, although they differ very widely from each other in the views they have adopted. In making a few introductory remarks to this lecture, we shall specify these two classes and endeavour to point out their error and danger.

The *first* of these classes of persons embraces all those who treat the doctrine or doctrines in question, as if they were entirely of a speculative nature, and who make them the topics of their discussions and controversies with others. These high and mysterious truths are quite common-place affairs in their mouths, and their minds being occupied with the arguments, scriptural or rational, by which they are established, they, no doubt, feel all the emotions of satisfaction and delight, as they succeed in skilfully fencing off the assaults of error or scepticism and doing valiant battle in the cause of orthodoxy. The sublime height to which the subject raises the mind, as it contemplates things pertaining to the secret will and providence of God, his supreme sovereignty and his glory, so exalts their conception and idea of their own powers of understanding, and the excellency of their knowledge, that they are ever ready to engage themselves in such speculations, and to pry further and further into this deep and inscrutable territory. It may, at the same time, be observed of such persons, how little the ambitious efforts of their minds have to do with their personal character or with their conduct in life, by way of effecting any real improvement. On the contrary, they seem to expend all

their religious concernment in merely speculating or theorizing; and as far as relates to their habits and practice, they are still left to the influence of their natural impulses or tendencies. They hold, it may be, the truth, but they hold it only intellectually. A strange infatuation has seized on them. They are fascinated by the demonstrations of logical evidence, and delighted with the clear and irrefragable conclusions to which they are brought by a rigid chain of proof. It is sad to contemplate the case of those who whilst abandoned to the power of lust, and enslaved by their own sins, have apparently no other outlet for their thoughts on religion than to engage in high controversy concerning the most sublime mysteries of revelation. It is plain that their knowledge of the truth, or in other words, their orthodoxy, and their apparent zeal in its behalf, does nothing towards the amelioration of their character. Intellectually they are fascinated or spell bound as by a powerful charm, in intruding into those high and mighty themes which relate to God's unfathomable purposes and secret counsels; but, morally or practically, they are still as much fascinated or charmed by the love of pleasure, and, instead of really submitting themselves to God, they are heady and high-minded, 'the servants of sin,' and the slaves of Satan. In short there is a presumptuous tendency to deal with these sacred themes as mere matters of speculation—and in this there is often a sad proof of our apostacy and alienation from God. Milton has seized on a true feature of fallen intellect, whether of man or angel, and presented one of the saddest, sorest spectacles that eye can look on or heart conceive, when

in that region which he speaks of as "a dungeon horrible, that on all sides round as one great furnace, flamed; yet from those flames no light, but rather darkness visible," he describes the occupation of fallen angels, in the following lines :

"Others apart sat, on a hill retired,
 "In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high
 "Of Providence, fore-knowledge, will and fate;
 "Fix'd fate, free-will, fore-knowledge absolute;
 "And found no end, in wandering mazes lost;
 "Of good and evil much they argued, then
 "Of happiness; and final misery,
 "Passion, and apathy, and glory, and shame,
 "Vain wisdom all, and false philosophy!
 "Yet, with a pleasing sorcery could chain
 "Pain for a while or anguish, and excite
 "Fallacious hope; or arm the obdurate breast
 "With stubborn patience, as with triple steel."

The *second* class of persons that we here specify consists of those who have an entire aversion and dislike to the subject, and who either discard it altogether from their creed, or shun the contemplation of it at all times. These seem to occupy an opposite position and to stand in the reverse attitude from the former class. Whilst *others* intrude with irreverent and familiar tread on the region of high speculation concerning the decrees of God and his sovereign purposes, without becoming practically either wiser or better; *they* avoid approaching these matters at all, and seem to be painfully affected by any allusion to the subject, however remote or indirect. Several causes may beget this frame or attitude of mind towards the doctrine of predestination.

In the *first place*, an imperfect knowledge of the doctrine itself, as presented in Scripture, leaves it exposed, in their minds, to certain objections which they cannot get

over, and consequently they are disposed to turn away from it altogether. Among these we may mention the objection, that it renders fruitless and useless any efforts which they may put forth for their own salvation or the avoidance of evil. They suppose that their *fate* is *scaled* or fixed, irrespective of and without reference entirely to any endeavours of their own or anything which they themselves are or may become through the use of means. Now the truth of the matter is that the value and necessity of means are never properly or fully seen except in connection with that certainty and definiteness which the doctrine in question implies. This, however, these persons cannot understand from their limited and imperfect notions on the subject. Again, it is supposed or felt by some that this doctrine makes God the author of evil, and presents him in a repulsive aspect, which they cannot endure to contemplate. But the Scripture is most emphatic in denying the truth of this objection, even as offered to the doctrine itself, when presented to our faith; and in perfect accordance with the representations there made, its most strenuous defenders shew that no such conclusion follows from it, by any necessary consequence. These and other objections do not lie against this doctrine in the estimate of any one who has studied the subject fully, in the light of Holy Scripture. Hence, whilst it is stated in the • “Westminster Confession of Faith,” that ‘God, from all eternity, did by the most wise and holy counsel of his will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass,’ it is added, ‘yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the

liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.'

But, probably, in the *second* place, the most common cause of aversion to this doctrine is to be found in the pride and self-sufficiency of the carnal mind. What else must it be in reality in any one who can venture to despise or reject that which God has so clearly and frequently revealed in his word? Will any one venture to pick and choose among the doctrines of Revelation? And what is it that makes it so revolting to many or most but just that it teaches man his entire and absolute dependance on God for the hope of eternal life, and all the blessings of salvation? It teaches *this*, in the most effectual manner; for it shews that the prime moving spring of all our mercies is in God's mere grace. This, probably, above all other causes, operates on men in prejudicing their minds against it. They would fain be free from the thought that God is sovereign, so far as they themselves are concerned; and they find great difficulty in renouncing all hope in themselves, in their own goodness, their own righteousness, their own wisdom—so as to lie before God helpless and hopeless, capable of salvation only through God's mercy and grace.

Now it is to be hoped that you do not belong to either of these classes of persons which we have just specified. It is to be hoped that you will not seek to indulge in a vain and idle pleasure which you might find in merely speculating on the mysterious doctrines connected with the subject—and that it will, at all times, be with a due mixture of caution and reverence that you enter on this field of study at all. At the same

time, it is to be hoped that you will remember that these truths have been revealed for our instruction, and that they are of a most practical tendency when properly understood and humbly received, for ‘all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.’

This much we have thought it well to premise, ere we proceed further in our exposition of the Epistle before us. We wish to be as little as possible occupied with such general objections as we have specified, and to give ourselves up to the simple and obvious meaning of Scripture, leaving the consequences to him who has given us his Word as ‘a sure light shining in a dark place.’

EPH. 1.—5. 6.

“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

The connection between these verses and that which precedes may be easily exhibited. In the fourth verse we are said to have been ‘chosen in Christ’ ‘that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.’ In the fifth verse the necessity and certainty of that advancement to a holy and blameless condition, is set forth in the fact that *God* has predestinated us to the adoption of children. For such a destiny—so exalted and glorious as that we should stand before God as his dear and accepted children—it is needful that we should

be made perfect in love. This could only be accomplished through that Covenant which God entered into with Christ as head and representative of the Church. 'God' therefore, 'chose us in him' 'having predestinated us unto the adoption of children,' that he might prepare us for so high a privilege and put us in possession of it, in what now belongs to it, and in its ultimate fulness.

When the King of Babylon desired that Daniel and certain others of the Children of Israel should be brought to stand in the royal palace and before the King, it was deemed necessary that they should be without blemish and well favoured, as well as skilful in all wisdom and knowledge and understanding. To prepare them for a position of such splendid dignity as the presence of that Eastern Monarch—he himself, we read 'appointed them a portion of the King's meat and of the wine which he drank; so nourishing them three years that at the end thereof they might stand before the King.'* But in the case before us, we read of an advancement of a higher kind. Here it is not to stand in the presence of an earthly king, however high and splendid his throne, and however vast his empire. It is not to dwell with one who is only different from ourselves in the outward circumstances of birth, and rank, and riches. It is not to be prepared in our bodily appearance, our outward dress, and artificial manners. Here we contemplate the palace and temple of the Great King—of him who is King of Zion, and who dwelleth in the high and holy place—whose throne is Heaven, and whose footstool is the Earth.

Here we must consider the essential dignity and grandeur and glory of this presence as consisting in purity and holiness of nature. But here surely since it is the desire and determination of This King that 'certain' should be brought to stand in his presence, it is needful that he should prepare them as *He* best sees fit for a destiny so pure and exalted. Therefore, 'having predestinated us unto the adoption of children,' 'he chose us in Christ that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.'

The connection being thus exhibited, I proceed to illustrate as best I can, the subject matter of these verses.

I. The first thing to be here considered is *the adoption of children to himself*, unto which we are said to be predestinated. This signal privilege is frequently referred to in Scripture and leads our minds at once to contemplate the natural condition of mankind in consequence of the fall and the entrance of sin into the world. The adoption of children necessarily implies that those admitted or chosen to this honour, are not naturally or legally children, but become so only by the will and act of him who adopts them. Under the ancient Roman law an individual who had no children of his own might adopt the child of another, who, then, would lawfully stand to him as a son, and become legally his heir. Thus, one who was neither naturally nor in law entitled to it might become invested in the position of a true son, if any childless person should so will and determine. Now God—the Father of all, in one sense, and who is not without sons both legal and natural, even those unfallen angels who constantly serve him and dwell in his presence—

has chosen to add to his family by the most peculiar and special act of adoption. We are by nature of another household and family, (so the Scriptures represent it) even of our father the Devil, and of the synagogue of Satan. We are the children of wrath—children of the wicked one—a corrupt seed—a race of evil-doers. But God has designed for us all the blessings of his own house and family. We are not children naturally as are the angels and as were Adam and Eve in paradise; but we become children by adoption. We have no natural connection of a spiritual kind with God ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh.’ ‘We were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin.’ We have no legal claim on God; for this has been entirely forfeited, and on the contrary, we have become the legal vassals and children of the Devil. Such is the actual condition from which God has been pleased to emancipate us by his special act of adoption. What is included in this gracious act or follows from it, we may gather from the passages in Scripture, in which it is spoken of. And on examining them we find the following blessings—all of which are doubtless embraced in the term before us.

1st. The ‘adoption of children’ is the *permanent* restitution of sinners unto the favour, love, and enjoyment of God. ‘Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.’ We are told that among the special proofs of God’s favour for his ancient people, Israel, these were the chief, viz.; ‘*The adoption*, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of

the law, and the service of God, and the promises,* But the adoption of Israel was only a type of the spiritual adoption of God's children, in all ages and in all countries. Those truly adopted under the covenant of grace, are immovably 'planted within the house of God.' 'The adoption of children' implies that each child becomes a permanent resident of God's house—a recipient of his Fatherly favours—an established member of his family.

2nd. There is implied or included in this, a participation in the Divine Glory, through the gift of the Holy Spirit. The third person in the Trinity receives the peculiar name of the 'Spirit of Adoption.' 'Because ye are children, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son unto your hearts crying, Abba Father.' And if, as the consequence of adoption, we receive the Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts, then we must undergo a change of nature—for 'that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' We become partakers of the divine nature, and are made sharers in the Divine Glory. To be made heirs of God imports as much as that we share in the glory and blessedness which belong to God. So Christ says concerning his disciples, 'The glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one,' and again, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me.'

3rd. In 'the adoption of children,' all is included whatsoever is embraced in the 'inheritance of the Saints in light.'

* Rom. ix., 4, 5. Gal. iv., 4.

‘It doth not yet appear what we shall be.’ ‘The half hath not yet been told us’ concerning the dignity and blessedness of heaven. In connection with the adoption of children, we must not forget this meaner part of us, the body—for whilst the spirit becomes fashioned anew after the image of God, and partakes of the divine nature, and of the divine glory, the body shall also undergo a transformation. ‘It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.’ It also shall stand forth at last ‘without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.’ It shall be fashioned anew by the hand of God, when he collects the dust of his Saints and prepares a tabernacle of beauty and immortal youth out of the remains of this earthly house. And this is no unworthy object of hope, even to God’s people. ‘Even we ourselves,’ says the Apostle, ‘which have the first fruits of the Spirit groan within ourselves waiting for the *adoption*, to wit, the redemption of our body.’

Then at last, clothed with new robes of light—partakers of the divine nature and dwelling in a heavenly body—united with Christ as their head and elder brother—admitted into the presence of the King—they shall realize in those pleasures which are at His right hand for evermore, the full privilege of the Adoption of Children.

The expression ‘*to himself*’ denotes the near and close relationship implied in adoption. God adopts us to himself—he grasps us by the hand—he presses us to his bosom—he surrounds us with his favour as with everlasting arms. Such is the nature of the relationship into which we are brought by

adoption. Oh! that we could realize it, and were suitably affected by it! How would we desire to love and serve God who hath so loved us.

II. The second thing to be observed from the words before us, is that God hath *predestinated us unto* the adoption of children.

Now this predestination stands connected with the election spoken of in the previous verse. In respect of the purpose or design of God, it is not to be distinguished from that election—as if the one preceded the other, in the order of time. When he elected or chose us in his love, he also predestinated us in his wisdom and power, and when he predestinated us he also in love chose us. But the term Election has respect more to the affection of the Divine Heart, so to speak; whereas the term Predestination has respect more to the plan and purpose of the Divine Mind. It leads us to consider a certain definite end, purposed, determined, and secured—which in the present case, is the adoption of children to Himself. Thus the blessings of salvation, and the final dignity, glory, and blessedness of the redeemed are fixed and certain. They are not liable to the accidents of chance, the uncertainties of ignorance, or the risks of contingency. These things may appertain to the creature, but cannot to the Creator. Infinite wisdom, and infinite power, can infallibly carry out the designs of infinite Sovereignty; and he who hath chosen us out of love, can easily, in his Sovereign wisdom and power, bring us into the possession of all that infinite love would have us to enjoy. Here, and here only, lies the security of every believer in Christ. Trusting in Christ, he has, or may have, a sure

hope of Eternal Life. Whence this confidence? Because he knows that God has given him this faith, and that he who hath begun a good work will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. By his faith he knows his calling. By his calling he knows his predestination. By his predestination he is assured of his final glorification. 'For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born of many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate them he also called; and whom he called them he also justified, and whom he justified them he also glorified.'*

III. The third thing observable in our text is the ground of this predestination, viz., '*According to the good pleasure of his will.*'

The expression is to be understood, of that Sovereign will of God which acknowledges no superior beyond itself, and no cause whatsoever moving it from without.

Here we cannot fail to observe how effectually the language of Scripture cuts off all ground of boasting on the part of the creature, and how completely it makes us dependant on the good will or pleasure of Jehovah. The words require no comment. They are clearer, as they stand, than they would be after attempting to explain them. They at once convey the idea of a Sovereign God doing according to his will, and finding the whole reason of his action in Himself and not at all in another. But oh, how difficult it is to commend this truth to the fallen heart and will of man! How effectually is

human merit cut off by this statement of the reason of God's procedure! How completely are we reduced to clay in the hands of the potter! But let the truth be told, and told in its plainest form. And then let the Apostle silence all objections by saying, as he does in Rom. ix. 20, 'Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?' 'The good pleasure of God'—or 'the pleasure of his own will'—or 'the good pleasure of his will'—are just terms expressive of the Sovereignty of God. This we know is a Sovereignty, on the whole *good* in the highest possible degree—and, in every respect and in all cases, *just* in the strictest sense. If so, then, who art thou, O man, that wouldst dare to object to it; as if thou couldst manage matters better, or bring out a wiser issue? Is not infinite power at the service of infinite goodness?—to what intent thy vain and proud reluctance to submit thyself to God, and thy impious audacity in replying against *Him*. Assuredly so long as thou art in that frame there is evidence enough that thou art ignorant of God and of thyself, and far from the kingdom of heaven. Be humbled before thy Maker—be ashamed before thy Judge—submit thyself to thy rightful King and Sovereign! Cease from self—let *that* god be cast down! Consider thyself as nothing in the presence of the Almighty Sovereign! Cast thyself down before His throne simply and solely as thou art! Peradventure God, according to the good pleasure of his will,

may fashion *thee* as a vessel of honour, and assign thee yet a portion with his own children !

IV. The Fourth observation we make, from the passage before us, is that God's predestination and the good pleasure of his will are carried out *by Jesus Christ—the beloved—in whom we are accepted*. The mystery of salvation is not perceived at all, until we bring into account the necessity of such an atonement as could be effected only by the Son of God himself. It is possible that the idea may have entered our minds, Why could not God have at once translated us into the kingdom of glory by the simple exercise of his will? But we must be instructed in such matters by the revealed truth of God. Now, according to this standard, we are taught that there was a necessity arising from the nature and perfections of God for the introduction of an adequate *atonement* before adoption could possibly take effect. 'It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.'*

This connects the purposes of God with our calling and duty. Jesus Christ is presented to us in the gospel as 'the way, the truth, and the life.' 'By him, if any come unto the Father, he shall in no wise be cast out.' 'As many as received him to them gave he power that they might become the sons of God.' 'We are all the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.'

Hence the necessity of faith. There is no impiety in saying that God could not save sinners without an atonement; for

* Heb. ii. 10.

this, on the contrary, is just saying that he is infinitely righteous. And so, in like manner, we may say that God cannot save them without faith on their part. This act or action of theirs is necessary, for, without it, the state implied is one of rebellion and distrust. Therefore He works faith in us, and we must act faith in Jesus Christ, in order to our own salvation.

Hence also, the certainty of faith attaining all the blessings of adoption. If God has constituted a certain mode of carrying out his purposes—if this mode be indeed and in truth the only mode applicable in our case—then when we fall in with it we become fellow workers with God, and are making sure of our calling and election. Hence, whosoever believes is or may become assured of his own salvation, and at all events is in reality safe. ‘They that trust in the Lord shall be like Mount Zion, which can never be removed.’

V. The fifth observation we make from the words before us is, that the final end which God hath proposed in the salvation of the Church, is ‘*the praise of the glory of his grace.*’ ‘He hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children, . . . to the praise of the glory of his grace.’

How frequently, or rather how invariably is the same object set forth in the Scriptures as the chief or highest end which God has secured by redeeming sinners and conferring on them all the blessings of salvation !

God can accomplish no higher or better end than the manifestation of his own glory. Since, in and of himself, he is infinitely and eternally blessed, therefore it was an act of pure goodness on the part of God to create a race of intelligent

beings, who being endowed with freedom of will, might in the right exercise of their powers and faculties find their happiness in contemplating his glory and sharing his favour. This freedom having been abused by all, in departing from the true object of delight and satisfaction, it becomes an act of grace on the part of God to renew to any, the favours of his love and friendship. Contemplating sinners lying in their guilt and pollution and misery, God found the highest motive for extending to them his goodness entirely in himself. 'I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own name's sake.'* 'Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for mine own holy name's sake, which ye have profaned.' † In the 2nd ch. of this Epistle and v. 7, the same view is presented as in our text. 'That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Jesus Christ.' And to exclude all and every consideration that might be supposed to arise on account of any worthiness in the sinner, Paul says in I. Cor. i. 27, 29, 'But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence.'

In the nature of things it must be so, for what motive can God find in his creatures, who is himself the original fountain of all things? or how can He gain any accession of happiness

* Is. xliii. 25. † Ez. xxxvi. 22.

who is infinitely and eternally blessed, in the absolute perfection of his own being? ‘Our goodness extendeth not to God.’ ‘Can a man be profitable unto God as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous; or is it any gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?’

It is implied in the very term ‘grace,’ as here used, that there is an entire absence of any worth or merit in the sinner inviting the regards of God or prompting his mercy. In like manner, it is not from any thing foreseen of a praiseworthy character, whether as wrought in or as performed by the sinner when put in a state of salvation, that this grace is exercised. This also is shut out by the very nature of grace, as Paul clearly and fully teaches in Rom. ix. ii. and xi. 5, 6.

But the manifestation of the grace of God is the simple prime end of all his gracious dealings. It finds its chief end in itself. There is the entire absence of every thing selfish in the exercise of pure love. And thus with God the free unmerited bestowment of his favour in saving his people, presents to them, and to all beholders the most wondrous and praiseworthy object of contemplation and devout admiration which the universe contains. To rejoice in this—to be occupied in exploring the height and depth and length and breadth of this grace—to engage in the praise of it to all eternity—whilst at the same time reaping the fruits of it—must be the consummation of blessedness.

We cannot now fully or completely realize the excellence and praiseworthy character of God’s grace. We cannot compre-

hend what the Apostle here calls 'the glory of his grace'—and it is only by the aids of comparatively unworthy illustrations or examples from human sources that many are able to obtain the faintest glimpse of it, as it is in reality. Picture to yourself that sorrowful dwelling where 'the pestilence that walketh in darkness' hath paused to slake its cruel thirst and glut its hungry maw on some one or other of the hapless inmates. You enter that house as the raging and foul-mouthed fiend is still glorying in his feast, and the wretched victim is writhing in all the agony of helpless suffering, and things seem fast advancing to a mortal crisis. From the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, scabs, blotches, and putrifying sores attest the unrelenting cruelty of the low-bred monster. You stand appalled, a cold sweat passes over you, and every sense you have bids you make a speedy retreat from the presence of a power which you cannot control, and which in the freakishness of its will may arrest yourself. But see! who is this that now approaches that loathsome bed, and lays a gentle hand on the breast of the sufferer? Who can this be, that so fearlessly handles and adjusts each racking limb, and lifts the feverish head to a softer and easier posture, and ceases not to administer the ever hopeful remedy? It is the mother! whose heart strings are entwined around a son—a daughter—just entered on the spring time of life, and whose love and care will be fully rewarded in the restoration which she aims at accomplishing. A higher and more wonderful, because a more uncommon example of benevolence, is to be found in the case of that philanthropist who spent the manhood of his days, and his means

and faculties, in exploring the miseries of imprisoned criminals and in endeavouring to ameliorate their condition. Not to relieve the sufferings of his own—not to bestow the sympathy and aid of social friendship, nor to lend a helping hand to unfortunate worth—that man exerted himself to mitigate the inflicted miseries of the guilty whom he knew not, and to lessen the sorrows of the wicked whom his heart loathed. Nor did he satisfy himself with a distant observation of their condition, and such information as he might obtain from others. He penetrated into the heart of the worst dungeons, and exposed himself, for the time being, to all the disagreeable and dangerous effects of polluted and pestilential air which the culprits had to endure constantly. Thus he visited the worst scenes of crime and misery on the continent of Europe. But this itself was not enough for his purpose. Not only as a visitor for a time, but in one case, and that the most trying to his benevolence, he became an actual inmate of a house from which all would be glad at once to flee as far as possible. For two months did he dwell, himself a prisoner by his own choice, in the plague hospital or lazaretto at Venice, that there he might experience the sufferings and sorrows in his own flesh, which he would relieve to others by the skill and resources of his practical wisdom. In such service did he live and die. And when the wondering gaze of a nation was fixed on an example of such unwonted philanthropy, and a monument to the memory of him who had effected so many improvements for the benefit of the wretched, was proposed, his peremptory refusal of any such honour confirmed his claim to be regarded as act-

ing from motives of the most pure and disinterested kind. How Christ like, in a measure! How like God himself!

But yet withal how much inferior must the purest and noblest philanthropy of man to man be in comparison of God's! The benevolence of that benefactor, whom we have here adduced, was after all but like the faintest streak of early morn compared with the full blaze of the mid-day sun, or as a drop in the bucket compared with the boundless ocean. Those miserable sufferers, whom he did so much to relieve, however worthless or guilty, had, to say the least, done *him* no injury. They had not been his personal enemies—nor had they done any damage to his personal estate. Nor was it in his power to confer more than partial and temporal relief, and that, in a great measure as affecting only the body. But in God's philanthropy we recognize the mercy of an insulted Sovereign and Law giver—the goodness of a dishonoured Creator—the love of the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. We see man as the tenant of a moral lazaret house, spiritually diseased in all his parts, helpless through his *own* daring rebellion! We behold God stooping over him with infinitely more than a mother's tenderness, or the strength of any human benevolence! Man he lifts by his grace, to the position and privilege of a son, and crowns him with everlasting kindness and infinite mercy! This is *the glory* of the grace of God. Oh, that by submitting ourselves to the grace of the gospel, we may be 'to the praise of the glory of his grace.' Then shall his whole design in sending his son into the world, be accomplished in our case, 'to our eternal happiness.'

LECTURE V.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—7.

In whom we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

In the previous two verses the Apostle set before us the first and prime blessing, included under the general expression, ‘all spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ,’ for which he blesses God, in the third verse, in the name of the whole church. That blessing is God’s electing love, to which, as to a fountain, all others are to be traced, and which issues at length in the glorious adoption and ingathering of his children in heaven. We were taken by the Apostle to the top of an exceeding high mountain, where he shewed us the kingdom of grace and the glory thereof, as he pointed out to us, at once, the origin of all our mercies under the gospel, and the final destiny of all believers. We are now, in this verse, introduced to the third distinct blessing, which he specifies, viz.: *redemption through the blood of Christ*. This exhibits the love of

God in the progress of its purposes, accomplishing what is needful in order to its final destination. Here we have to consider a blessing which more immediately concerns our present condition, and in which we may warrantably feel, at least in the first instance, a more immediate interest. In truth the former blessing of election can only be rightly or comfortably contemplated, in the order of experimental religion, after we have duly apprehended and heartily entertained the blessing of redemption, which is now brought before our minds in the text. When the Israelites were still in the house of bondage, and groaning under their cruel taskmasters, and whilst yet no prospect of deliverance appeared, it would have been but a poor consolation to pride themselves on their connection with Abraham; and, on the other hand, it would have been idle folly to occupy their minds in questionings and disputings concerning the *reality* of the covenant which God had made with their fathers. But how would the case be altered after their redemption was realized; and, beyond the Red Sea, where their oppressors lay buried, how might they joyfully sing of the Lord's purposed mercies, and of their interest in the special favour of Jehovah!*

It has always been reckoned a prerogative of sovereignty to open the prisons of the land at special times to certain prisoners, as a token of royal clemency, and a benign example of the goodness of supreme power. In view of such acts of royal pardon having been once and again performed, but in ignorance of both the time and the objects of the next exercise of

* Ex. xv.

such clemency, you can conceive a set of prisoners to be engaged, but most uselessly and perplexingly, in speculating concerning the matter, under all its aspects, and the likeliness or unlikeliness of their own escape. Some might dispute the existence of such a prerogative as pertaining to the sovereign, and others would call in question its justice, or rail at the favoritism manifested by it. Any reasonings, however, which they might indulge in must in every case leave them where they are, still groping with their hands around the walls of their darkened cells. How differently will the released captives think and speak of that gracious act of Sovereignty, in consequence of which they now find themselves free citizens of the commonwealth, breathing freely the air of heaven !

It was in this order that the Apostle, doubtless, was led to think and speak of God's electing love. He had been redeemed himself, and now rejoicing in the liberty wherewith Christ maketh free, he can comfortably reflect on God's sovereign purposes, and refer all the blessings of his emancipation to God's electing love.

And there is nothing of which we are more certain, than that, whilst the slaves of sin and Satan cannot help looking with jealousy and fear and distrust on the Sovereignty of God, there is not one true believer, or one who has been delivered from the chains of darkness and evil, who will not join with the Apostle in this ascription of praise to the original grace of God.

I. With these views let us proceed to consider more fully the blessing of 'Redemption.' *'In whom we have redemption . . . the forgiveness of sins.'*

The expression 'redemption' has direct and immediate reference to our ruined and wretched condition in consequence of the fall; and it is used to signify our entire deliverance from all the evils involved or implied in our being sinners against God under his righteous and holy law. It is a term which comprehends our complete emancipation from sin and its consequences. Thus, in Rom. iii., 24, we are said to be 'justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' The same view of redemption is given in Col. i., 14, where nearly the same words are used as in our text. In Tit. ii., 14, Christ is said to have given himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

Lastly, we are said 'to wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies,' Rom. viii. 23, referring to the deliverance of our bodies from death and the grave, and corresponding to that in Hosea xiii., 14, 'I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.'

Numerous parallel passages might be quoted where the same idea occurs, though not precisely the same word. We have selected the representatives of three classes of texts, exhibiting three aspects of 'Redemption' as it is actually bestowed, corresponding to three aspects of ruined man.

In the First place, and most important of all, he is a guilty being because he is a sinner. He has not simply injured himself and defaced his glory, but he has insulted his Maker and

dishonoured his work, by sinning *against Him*. He is lying under the awful displeasure of the Sovereign, whose curse has actually been pronounced. But 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.'*

Secondly, Man, through sin, has become habituated to sin. He is enslaved by a dominant power within, from which he cannot escape. One vice may be exchanged for another. Viler and grosser habits may be removed or supplanted by others more subtle and refined. But let man turn in whatever direction he pleases, he is only driven about by divers lusts and pleasures. He is *dead* in trespasses and sins. He is incarcerated in a prison house of sinful vices and habits, and held fast by legal chains of spiritual wickedness. Now, from this actual slavery, we are redeemed by Christ, in consequence of his atonement, and by virtue of his gracious spirit. 'Ye are not under the law, but under grace; sin, therefore, shall not have dominion over you.' †

Thirdly. We must consider all the outward and physical evils which sin has brought into the world, of which death may be said to be the climax. From all these, however sad and melancholy, 'redemption' effects a substantial deliverance now, whilst we have to battle against them, and a complete and glorious riddance at last, in our recovery from the grave. Thus as sin, in a sense, is its own punishment, in the spiritual death which is involved in it, so by a happy and triumphant transmutation death is made to be its own death and de-

* Gal. iii. 13. † Rom. vi. 14.

struction, as it issues at length in the spiritual life, even as regards the body itself, of God's redeemed children.*

Redemption thus includes deliverance (1.) from the guilt of sin, (2.) from the power of sin or from the habit and practice of it, and (3.) from physical evil, and death itself at last.

But the Apostle here brings into view only the first of these blessings; for he makes Redemption equivalent to the forgiveness of sins. 'In whom we have redemption through his blood—the forgiveness of sins.' It is not that the forgiveness of sins includes all that is implied in redemption, or exhausts its meaning any more than the redemption of the body in Rom. viii. 27, expresses all that is included in adoption. But the forgiveness of sins is that part of redemption to which he wishes to direct our attention in this verse and in this connection. And for very good reasons he does so; for is it not plain that deliverance from guilt is the prime part of redemption, from which all else follows by necessary consequence? The first thing to be effected in the case of sinners under a Sovereign God and a righteous law, is to remove their guilt, that they may stand free from all blame-worthiness, and become exempt from the curse. But, this effected, the rest may be expected certainly and surely to follow, from the same grace and mercy which have already been brought into exercise.

When by a generous act of clemency the Sovereign has forgiven the crimes of certain prisoners that have been, in the course of justice, consigned to the dungeons, and confirmed

his intention by a public proclamation of the royal pardon, it will follow, as a matter of course, that steps will be taken to break asunder the manacles and chains by which the captives have been held fast and the prison doors will be thrown open, to allow of their escape.

In like manner, when God by an act of his grace forgives sinners their guilt, and frees them from condemnation, it is but due to Himself, and a necessary consequence of his sentence of pardon, that they shall become actually free from the bondage of sin and delivered from its enslaving power. In other words, if redemption from the guilt into which we have been brought is achieved for us, this will imply redemption in its other aspects, or deliverance from sin and evil in all the ways in which we are naturally subject to them. Hence the importance of 'the forgiveness of sins;' for *upon this* all depends. You may spend your time and labour—your prayers and pains—altogether for no purpose, as far as reforming your lives is concerned, unless you start from the liberty which 'PARDON' secures. You will be like prisoners vainly endeavouring to break their fetters or force a way through barriers which the strong arm of the law has raised to confine them. Be assured you lie under the curse of God's law, and that it is vain and hopeless for you to attempt any thing good so long as the very penalties of law are sealing and confirming your condemnation. You may be at once persuaded that no human efforts can satisfy the demands of the Divine Justice. The one thing needful for you in the first instance is the forgiveness of your sins, and your deliverance from the curse of God's law. To be pardoned,

O sinner, ought to be with you the first and most urgent of your desires. For how, otherwise, shall you escape? Sin has dominion over you. 'The strength of sin is the law.' Law will mercilessly land you in everlasting perdition. Are you pardoned then? Have your sins been forgiven? Are you seeking this at the footstool of the mercy seat? Oh, what an awful thing to feel 'my sins are still unforgiven!' Yet this must be the state of many. But a still more awful thing is to be careless and heedless while that is the case. Yet many seem scarcely to feel that they are sinners, and thus have no conception of redemption. Again, you see persons, day after day, repeating the same sins, notwithstanding their effects, and, held captive, infatuated to such an extent as actually to justify their sinning, or extenuate its enormity—or comparing themselves with others—flattering themselves that they are not so bad as some, and have a better chance at last. What slavery! what misery! But why is this? Is it simply because they have become habituated to sinning? Is their bondage merely moral, the effect of their own constant willing that which is wrong and evil? No! That is not all. Why this sinful habit? Whence this constant willing? How come they thus to be habituated to sin? *Because* they are under the curse—by nature guilty—condemned and banished from God's favour. They are legally, i. e. by God's holy, just, and righteous law, the captives of sin and the vassals of Satan.

Now, it is only God who can break this bondage. He only can exert a Sovereign's prerogative, for he only *is* Sovereign. And, blessed be God, he hath exerted it in and by his

Son—for we have redemption through his blood—the forgiveness of sins.

We might here expatiate at length on the fulness and completeness of this redemption which consists in the ‘forgiveness of sins,’ did our space only permit; for a more precious subject cannot surely engage our thoughts. Grant that you feel yourselves to be ‘sinners’ in the largest and fullest sense of the term; grant that you know your natural or personal position before God as sinners; grant that you are concerned above all things as to the place you shall occupy before the Judge at the last day; then surely no discovery could be made to you more opportunely or more exactly suitable to your case than that you have redemption in Christ—the forgiveness of sins. And let me inform you that the entire removal of all guilt whatsoever, original as well as actual, is included in this divine act of amnesty. If it be true, and the Scripture makes it sure, that ‘in Adam all died,’ and that death hath passed upon all, for that all have sinned in him; then how blessed the corresponding and graciously appointed representation, in virtue of which ‘all in Christ’ are made alive! Are our sins great? This redemption has been accomplished for many of the very greatest sinners. ‘It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.’ ‘If your sins should be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; if they be red like crimson they shall be as wool.’ Are they numerous, and oft repeated? Oh, sad to think that they are more than the hairs of our head, or the sand on the sea shore! Oh miserable, that we should so often have re-

turned, as 'the dog to his vomit, or as the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire!' But the redemption of Christ is sufficient to cover all. Through this means the encouragement of Isaiah receives all its urgency and weight. 'Let the wicked return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon;' or as it is more expressively in the margin, 'for he will multiply to pardon.'* And it is the gospel covenant that Jeremiah describes, when he introduces God promising thus: 'I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel, to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.'†

'The forgiveness of sins' is just a way of expressing the idea that all guilt whatsoever is removed; so that the sinner stands before God, in the eye of his law, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. In the completeness of this forgiveness, we recognize its highest excellence; for did but one sin remain against the sinner, that alone were sufficient to condemn him. As by one sin man originally fell; so, if but one were to abide unforgiven, he could not be raised up again. But blessed be God! 'the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.'‡

II. In the second place, in connection with this redemption, our text brings before us the ransom by which it was effected, In whom we have redemption '*through his blood.*'

* Isaiah lv. 7. † Jer. xxxiii. 7-8. ‡ 1 John i. 7.

The redemption of sinners is always spoken of as accomplished by means of paying a ransom or satisfaction ; and so far as forgiveness is concerned, that is more immediately connected with the sufferings of Christ. Now, ‘the blood of Christ’ is just a brief expression, denoting all his atoning sufferings, both of soul and body. The reason why the expression ‘the blood of Christ’ is adopted by the inspired writers to represent the whole sufferings of Christ is, we suppose, in order that all the sacrificial types of the Old Testament may be seen to have had their fulfilment in him. ‘We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.’* ‘He is the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.’† Now the blood is the life of the animal. Its whole life is in its blood. Shed its blood you end its life. Therefore, the sacrifice of the animal, by shedding its blood, i. e., by offering its whole life, was a fit type of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. And so, by a figure, the blood of Christ denotes the whole and entire sacrifice of himself as man—soul and body—in short his life, which he rendered for the purpose of redemption. Thus he himself speaks : ‘The son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give *his life* a ransom for many.’‡ Again he says : ‘I lay down my life for the sheep.’|| He declared in instituting the supper that his body was broken for us, and his blood shed for the remission of sins.

His work accomplished, his atonement finished, his servants

* 1 Pet. i. 18-19. † John i. 29. ‡ Matt. xx. 28. || John x. 15.

afterwards invariably fix our attention on his death as the expression of all his sufferings, and the cause of our deliverance. Thus, (i. Peter iii., 18) 'Christ hath suffered once for sins, being put to death in the flesh;' and Paul thus, (Ro. v. 10) 'We were reconciled to God by the death of his son;' and (Col i. 20-22) 'He hath reconciled you in the body of his flesh through death.' (Heb. ix. 15) 'That by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.'

All the miseries and sorrows of him who was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; his pains in the flesh; his agonies in the spirit; his bloody sweat; his ignominious sufferings on the cross; his torment of soul on the cross, in his separation from his God; the separation of his soul and body on the cross in death—are all as it were summed up in the shedding of his blood—the piercing of his side—which gave evidence of his death, and terminated and closed the whole of his sacrificial work.

You will observe then that a great and mysterious and awful work of suffering had to be gone through, O sinner, in order to thy redemption, that your sins might be forgiven. It is not by a simple exercise of power that you are delivered; for though all things are possible with God, it is not possible for him to set aside his own justice or deny his own law. But to meet the ends of Sovereign authority, and at the same time redeem sinners 'he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up unto the death for us all.'

It is not by a system of moral recovery; it is not merely by truth, that you are redeemed. A prior difficulty must be surmounted, and that could only be accomplished by the surrender of his well beloved.

But we are redeemed by blood—by the sufferings of Jesus Christ—by his atoning sacrifice.

1. This wondrous plan is *God's own device or method*. It originated in Him—in His love and wisdom. He said 'save from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom.' *

As Isaac went up the mountain with his father Abraham, bearing the wood on his shoulders, whilst his father carried the fire, he said in the simplicity of his heart, 'Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' † We may say, in all truth—behold the fire of divine justice, ready to burst forth! behold also our sins, like fuel to feed the fire! Where is a substitute to bear our punishment? God will provide a lamb said the Patriarch to his son. 'God has provided a substitute for us,' says the Gospel message to all. 'Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world!'

2. The sacrifice was *offered up freely* by Christ. He gave himself. He had power to lay down his life, and he had power to take it up again. But he said, 'Lo! I come. I delight to do thy will, O my God.' ‡ 'Christ also hath loved us, and gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.' ||

3. The offering *was accepted by God* as a full satisfaction for the

* Job xxxiii. 24. † Gen. xxii. 7. ‡ Heb. x. 7. || Eph. v. 2.

sins of his people. 'Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.'* Had his obedience unto death not been perfect, he would not thus have been exalted. But he was made perfect through sufferings. God accepted both him and his offering. Thus is God satisfied with the ransom. Thus may the prisoners go free. Then redemption has been purchased and secured by God's acceptance of the ransom. 'What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh.'* Sin is condemned. It has no longer any manner of right over believers either to condemn them or to reign over them. They are free from the law of sin and death. O glorious redemption! O wondrous recovery! How may we become interested in this so great salvation?

III. Our text, in the third place, answers this question, and shews us how we become partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ. '*In whom,*' says the Apostle, '*we have redemption.*'

We believers *have* redemption. It is our actual possession in Christ. We come to it by being in him. This brings this all important subject to bear upon each individual in a practical manner. There is no doubt that Christ actually redeemed all his own people, so that none of them can be lost. The atonement was a definite transaction. Christ just represented those who were chosen of God and predestinated to the

* Phil. ii. 8-9.

† Rom. viii. 3.

adoption of children. Whom else did he represent? For whom besides did he pay a ransom? Shall we impute folly, or uncertainty, or injustice to God? It is impossible that God should act so unwisely as to send his Son to save any who may yet be lost. He is a rock—his work is perfect. It is horrible to suppose that Christ suffered and died for the sins of any who shall suffer eternally in hell. God did not devise, and Christ did not procure a mere possibility of salvation—a mere chance of deliverance, as if that would be of any benefit to sinners, dead in trespasses and sins; but *actual* deliverance, actual redemption, actual forgiveness of sins. Those in Christ, represented by him, united vitally to him, *have* this redemption.

Now this is an all important view of the matter. You must not separate between Christ and his work. It is not by contemplating a fact, or a transaction that took place eighteen hundred years ago; it is not by knowing and believing a doctrine concerning the death of Christ; it is not by coldly thinking of an event wonderful in itself and imparting interest and importance to every other sacred event recorded in Scripture; it is not in any such way as this, that you come to have redemption—the forgiveness of sins for yourself. But, looking up to a risen and, exalted Redeemer, and by faith becoming united to him, you embrace Him in his person, offices, and work, as your present Saviour, able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him. He can give you the benefit of all that he did on earth, and so wash you from your guilt, and deliver you from evil. Time—the exact time—when he accomplished your redemption is out of the reckoning. For that

matter, the atonement might yet have to be made and the same inquiry might interest us, as the prophets of old, who searched what and what manner of time, the sufferings of Christ should be endured. The important thing is to know Christ, and though the event that took place at Calvary were yet in the future, still, if like the Patriarch we have assurance and faith to say 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' it were enough.

Suppose that the enemies of our country had marshalled their forces and prepared themselves for an invasion of our sovereign's dominions,—that they had mustered all their strength and called up all their ancient hostility to bring degradation and misery upon ourselves and our children,—it is possible to conceive, that even in such a case the minds of all might rest in quietness, and little anxiety would be felt on the subject. For, in addition to other resources, it might please the God of Providence to raise up and bring forward a General of such skill and prowess, of such experience and indomitable energy, that success might safely be counted on as the certain result of an actual struggle. And as the courageous and patriotic place themselves under his command, and wait for his instructions, and implicitly follow his leadership, they feel assured of victory. He is their strength and hope, and as they point to him in all the confidence of loving trust, they say, *there* is our deliverance from the impending foe!

But what leader of armies or general of soldiers is to be trusted and obeyed and relied on like our Emmanuel, of whom God says in Isaiah iv. 4, 'Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and a commander to the people?'

Now it is by putting yourself under this exalted Prince and Saviour; by trusting in him; by submitting to his rule; by following his directions; that you obtain an interest in his victory over sin and death and all your spiritual foes. 'In him you have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin;' Look then to him, take him now as yours, and be you his. To him go! who was dead, but is alive for evermore, and who has the keys of hell and of death!—AMEN.

LECTURE VI.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—8-9.

According to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself.

The inspired Apostle is teaching us, in these verses, to form worthy conceptions of the greatness and glory of the grace of God, in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ. How far above all human merit that grace stands in his estimate, is evident from the favorite expression he employs, in the seventh verse and elsewhere, 'the riches of his grace.' It is absolutely priceless in its nature. It passes human knowledge, and all we can say of it is that it is Divine; and, like God himself, it cannot be found out, or found out unto perfection.

Such views of the grace of God, as the Apostle presents, are understood and realized only by those who, in a manner like him, have been struck to the ground by a sense of guilt and

impotency, and have learned to regard themselves as 'the chief of sinners.' But the self-righteous and the self-sufficient remain in darkness, though 'they walk in the light of their own fire, and compass themselves with sparks of their own kindling.'*

I. From the words before us, the first observation we would make is that the grace of God in redemption is abundant grace—'Wherein he hath abounded toward us.'

The term here used corresponds exactly with the idea expressed by the previous phrase, 'the riches of his grace.' God is 'rich in mercy' and 'great in love.'† By the abundant grace of God, and by that alone are sinners saved.

There is a very confused notion in the minds of many, as to what constitutes ordinary riches among men. It is very commonly supposed that a man is rich who possesses a large sum of money, or whose income is above the usual or common income of most. You are very apt to imagine that the individual whose revenue exceeds your own, in any considerable degree, is on that account rich or wealthy, without for a moment reflecting on his necessary or actual expenditure arising from his circumstances or position in life. But this is a very improper and inconsiderate way of viewing the matter. Riches or wealth is a relative thing, having relation to the individual's actual wants and necessities, amid which he is placed. It is, in fact, that which is over and above, or which superabounds or overflows, after all actual wants have been supplied. Riches, in any case, is just surplusage, or the excess of what a man possesses or obtains above his natural necessary or actual expen-

* Isaiah l. 11. † Ch. 11-4.

diture; and degrees of riches among men depend upon the comparative amounts of that excess, and not upon the abstract sums of money which they possess irrespective of the necessities of their circumstances. Nothing can be plainer than this, and yet it is a principle often little considered or attended to in the practical affairs of this life. When a man's means correspond exactly, neither more nor less, with his wants and necessities arising from his position and circumstances, he must be regarded as neither poor nor rich. When his means fall short of these wants, however much he may pass through his hands, he is poor. And when his means are greater than his wants he is rich, just in the proportion in which the one exceeds the other. Riches, in short, means superabundance, and to be rich in any respect whatsoever, is to possess or display an excess in that respect, over and above what is necessary or natural.

Now these remarks may tend to enable us to perceive the appropriateness of the Apostle's language in describing the grace of God. He says that God abounds in grace toward us. He speaks of the riches of his grace. He says God is rich in grace. Our redemption is a proof of superabounding grace; and the Apostle would have us to realize it in its exceeding riches, as it alights upon us, and confers upon us its blessings. Let us, then, consider for a moment in what sense the grace, by which we are saved, is properly called abundant grace. It must be obvious, at first sight, that there is a vast difference between beings who are perfectly holy and such as are fallen and sinful, in their claims on the regard of God. Toward the

angels that have kept their estate, who are pure and perfect in their nature and actions, toward our first parents before sin entered into the world, God might, and of necessity would, exercise a natural and spontaneous love, delighting as he does, and must do, in the goodness which consists of perfect moral integrity and righteousness. The fruits of that love, in his gifts and kindness towards such spotless beings, might still be appropriately called by the name of grace, for under no circumstances can the creature bring the Creator into debt. But the exercise of this grace, in all the gifts and bounties of its liberality, however free and unpurchased, even in such a case, would doubtless be as necessary as it would be natural to God. He could not deny himself—he could not avoid loving and blessing those who stood before him lovely and excellent in all the beauty of their original perfection. The love of God (or, because of its freeness and the absolute dependance of the creature on the Creator, the grace of God) could look round on myriads of such beings and find a natural and necessary outlet for its treasures of blessing. Each in his place becomes a regular recipient of the goodness of God's grace—a constant dependant on the resources of his love. And it might have been supposed that here the Divine love or grace would have stayed itself. Within the circle or sphere enclosing all the unfallen, the holy, the good—his own true and faithful subjects—we might reasonably have expected that he would have lavished all the store of blessing which was available for the purposes of his love or grace. We might have conceived the limit to his goodness to be fixed within the channel of its

natural, original and necessary outflow, towards beings of unfallen character and of perfect integrity. But no! God's grace far exceeds these original and natural boundaries. Its wealth is not to be measured even by the innumerable demands made upon it of a kind to which it naturally and necessarily responds. It hath also compassed and secured the redemption of *sinner*s of mankind, as the sand on the shore innumerable. God hath shewn that he has a riches and a wealth of grace, which we could not have dreamed of, and which still we cannot estimate aright. He hath abounded or superabounded in grace toward us, by Jesus Christ.

From the greatness of the sacrifice which the grace of God made in order to our redemption, even the sacrifice of his own Son, we obtain a grand demonstration of the abundance of that grace, or its overflowing riches. In its original exercise—within the scope of those demands on its treasures, which unsullied excellence makes there is no need for any such sacrifice, but, on the contrary, it seems nothing but natural and every way easy and *cheap*, so to speak, for God to love and bless the lovely and the perfect. But, as it often happens that the prodigal son in a family costs his parents far more than all the rest in reclaiming him to the ways of decency and propriety, which they never forsook, and the strength of the parental love is tried and proved not so much by the ordinary exercise of it to the decent and well ordered children of the household, as by its measures of an extraordinary kind in such an exceptional case as that referred to; so, in the redemption of lost sinners, we behold not merely grace, but riches of grace, in the amazing length to

which it has gone, to reclaim the wanderers and bring them back to glory. In this, he hath surely given proof of an abundant grace, which is nowhere else to be met with in his vast dominions. But of the greatness of that sacrifice, as illustrating the abundance of God's grace we shall not farther speak at present. What we desire to impress upon you is that we owe our salvation not to that love of God, which, however deep and infinite and inexhaustible in itself, found its natural outlet towards unfallen beings, but to the overflowings of God's love or grace, by which it becomes *abundance* or *riches of grace*.

You have read or heard that the land of Egypt owes all its fertility and consequent wealth to that magnificent river, the Nile, which annually overflows its banks and covers the entire breadth of the country, not only watering but enriching its soil, and rendering it in the highest degree productive. Egypt were otherwise a barren tract of arid sand. But, as it is, and with that extraordinary provision, it has often been spoken of as the granary of the world. That which makes Egypt what it is, in respect of its productiveness, is the Nile, by its periodic inundations. "The Nile is Egypt"—for were that wonderful river to keep within its usual banks, and to confine itself to its natural channel, however deep and ample its waters *there* might be, the country would return to desolation, and Egypt would be no more thought or spoken of than the wild wastes of the African deserts.

Now what that noble river, the Nile, is to Egypt, the grace of God is to the household of faith. Had that grace kept to the channel to which we might reasonably have supposed it

naturally confined, had it been only such love as would pursue its course of blessing to the objects in which it could take complacent delight, had there been no overflowing or superabundance or riches about the grace of God, then *we sinners* should for ever have remained in that state of wretchedness and desolation into which our sins have brought us. However infinite God's love in itself, however unfathomable in its resources, however bounteous toward holy beings, it still depends on its having exceeded the apparently natural bounds and the ordinary channel, that *we* have seen salvation and are made blessed with all spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. But thanks to the abundance of grace—'the parched ground has become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.'* 'For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd; and their soul shall be as a watered garden: and they shall not sorrow any more at all.'†

II. In the second place our text speaks of the revelation or manifestation of this abundant grace in and through the gospel—'*Abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will.*'

These words refer, in general, to the outward revelation of his grace which God hath made in the gospel, and also to the inward discovery or apprehension of that grace which God effects in the minds and hearts of believers.

*Isaiah xxxv. 7. †Jer. xxxi. 11-12.

The gospel contains the wisdom of God unto salvation—that wisdom which the world cannot reach—and which, in the fulness of its disclosures, was hid from ages, even until God spoke to us by his Son. God hath been pleased to enlighten the darkness of the world by the gospel, which is ‘as a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise’ in the hearts of all his redeemed people.* Amid the dimness and uncertainty of human wisdom in this sin-beclouded world, the sun of righteousness hath arisen with healing on his wings. In God’s abundant grace there has been made a disclosure of true and heavenly wisdom, when the world by wisdom had lost sight of God altogether. ‘Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them?’ We may here observe that the word ‘mystery,’ in the clause ‘having made known to us the mystery of his will,’ denotes what could not be discovered or found out except by revelation. According to the usage of the word in the New Testament it applies to the gospel itself and all the truths it unfolds, which are mysteries because they are ‘secrets’ of God’s mind and will, which, by unaided reason, could not have been discovered. It does not necessarily imply that they are incomprehensible after being revealed, but simply that they are undiscoverable by any efforts of our own. We may be initiated into the mysteries of the Gospel, and they may become to us palpable truths or realized facts of our experience. At the same time the word is sometimes applied to that which is incomprehensible by us, and which remains a secret for the present; as in the passage,

*2 Pet. 1-19.

‘great is the mystery of godliness—God made manifest in the flesh.’ Here, however, it is used in the same sense, as in Rom. xvi. 25, where the subject matter of the doxology which the Apostle utters, is simply the Gospel, viewed as a revelation of the will and mind of God. ‘Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.’

Now the ‘mystery of God’s will’ is just his own secret purpose and plan of Redemption by Jesus Christ, displaying, as it does, his justice and mercy, his grace and his truth—all combined and harmonized in glorious effulgence—in the salvation of guilty and helpless rebels. Who could have thought of this? By what means could it have been discovered? Had any of the ancient sages of antiquity, in their wisdom, conceived of such a thing? Could science with all its evidences of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, indicate, not to say demonstrate, his mercy and grace? ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.’* But as this mystery of God’s will is made known in the Gospel, it embodies and exhibits the true wisdom—even the wisdom of God. ‘It is the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

This wisdom is contained and exhibited in the Gospel, but it does not follow after all, that men can or will perceive it of themselves. When Melanethon first beheld it at his conversion he thought he could easily persuade others, and enable them also to behold it. He tried this, but found that it was just as the Apostle represents the matter—‘to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.’ He soon knew that ‘old Adam was too strong for young Melanethon, and that human depravity was more than a match for human persuasion, without the grace of God.’

But the text shews us that God does display his grace: yea, the abundance of his grace! in effecting an inward discovery or apprehension of the mystery of the Gospel. He hath ‘made known to us,’ says the Apostle—implying, that he hath made us to know, perceive, apprehend, and feel the mystery of his will, i. e., his purpose and plan of redemption. This God does, when by his Spirit he opens the understanding, and ‘shines in the heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.’ So much of God’s purpose and plan in the redemption of the lost is seen and felt as makes the sinner to become reconciled to God, to submit to the righteousness of God, and to embrace the ample and sure provisions of grace. Now both these things are necessary and go together, in connection with the operation of God’s grace. The outward

*1 Cor. ii. 7-8.

revelation in the Gospel of the mystery or secret of God's will—displaying his nature and his perfections—his merey, his grace—his justice, his holiness—in the purpose and plan of the sinner's recovery—that is made known in the Word of God so fully and clearly that nothing more is needed in the form of knowledge or instruction. But the understanding requires to be fitted and capacitated for receiving it—there must be an internal rectification of the mind—and an illumination of the soul. *This* God's Spirit effects when he opens the eyes of the understanding, 'to know God, the one living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.'

Suppose a man to have been born blind and to have dwelt all his life in a dark room, into which the sun never shines—it is manifest that *two* things must be done, ere he can enjoy the blessing of sight, and behold the various objects by which he may be surrounded. In the first place were the windows of his darkened chamber thrown open, and the light of the sun admitted to cast its beams on every object which it contains, then in reality every object will become visible, and the possibility of seeing it will so far be effected. A luminousness will thereby be imparted to the abode of the blind man, which makes everything, therein, capable of being seen. But this is not enough; for through those dead and darkened eyeballs not one ray can penetrate—and in vain for him does the sun shine, and every material thing acquire its visibility. It is still all one to him whether the sun shines or not, for the faculty of sight is entirely wanting. But if, by some application of skill or art the impediment were removed from his eyes and the faculty of

vision imparted to him, then at once and easily does the whole aspect and appearance of surrounding things enter his soul, and a new world opens to his gaze. The two things must concur. There must be an outward visibility, and also the power of vision. If either were a-wanting darkness must sit as night upon the unfortunate man.

Thus with regard to the 'mystery of God's will,' which is the Gospel plan of salvation, the two things are supplied in the abundance of God's grace—the outward revelation contained in the Scriptures, and the inward discovery or illumination effected by God's Spirit.

1. How true is it that without an external and positive revelation man could never have attained to any certain or reliable knowledge of God as the Redeemer and Saviour of guilty man! At best the idea of such a God could only have been conjectural, leaving the mind in doubt and fear, since it is met by the opposite idea of God as the avenger of wrong—the punisher of sin.

2. But how true is it, also, that without the illumination of grace, the Bible itself is of no avail! 'The natural man receiveth not the things of God.' His eyes are blinded by the god of this world, who makes use of the contradictions and perversions of fallen intellect to obscure the testimony of Scripture, and hide the 'mystery of God's will' from the soul.

3. Hence the line of our duty, as well as privilege, is clearly set before us. Instead of inferring, as some would have you to do, that you are utterly shut out from hope—that there is nothing for you to do, that, in such circumstances, all exertion

is vain—the very opposite conclusion is that which you ought to adopt. There is hope for you in your darkness, for the true light shines from heaven in the word of the gospel; there is encouragement for you in your blindness, for the Divine Spirit is near you to open your eyes. Study, then, that word with diligence and prayer; rely on the aids of God's Spirit; persevere more and more steadily in such exercise; seek to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—and assuredly you will be made wise unto salvation; you will be made 'light in the Lord,' for you will have an 'unction from the Holy One, and will know all things.'

III. In the third place, we may briefly notice the last clause of the passage before us, as again bringing into view the sovereign good pleasure of God. Here it is yet more strikingly held forth, as the true and original cause of all our mercies. It is described as '*his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.*'

Every view which can be rightly taken of this clause is full of comfort and satisfaction to a true believer; and even the sinner, who is still afar off, may find in it a drawing influence that should lead him to return to God; nay the *only* influence that *can* draw him as an intelligent being.

1. *This purpose is one of Supreme Sovereignty.*

It is the purpose of Him who 'doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth,'* 'whose gifts and calling are without repentance'†—who has been infallibly saving a people to himself from the first, and

* Dan. iv. 35. † Rom. xi. 29.

who continues to do so. As we cannot obtain salvation unless from Him who possesses supreme *right* and *authority*, how ought we to prize the message of the gospel which is in reality a call coming direct from the Sovereign, saying 'Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else'*

2. *It is one of infinite benevolence.*

It is his *good* pleasure, and results from the tender compassionate and bounteous love of his *heart*, as well as from the 'counsel of his will' considered simply as *will*. *This* is what the Lord *loves* to do—to save sinners; to redeem the lost; to keep them in safety unto eternal life. This is what his *nature* prompts and incites him to aim at and secure, if we may use such expressions. It is *well* pleasing unto God.

3. *It is one of all sufficient power.*

No language could more expressively set forth the idea of irresistible power than that here used, as applied to God, and to his purpose in the application of the blessings of Redemption. The Apostle would have us to feel the most perfect security in committing ourselves to Christ, (at least this seems to be one of the most important inferences from his language,) and in 'looking up to God over all,' as our eternal portion. Unto Him, therefore, be glory both now and for ever.—AMEN.

* Is. xlv. 22.

LECTURE VII.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—10.

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him."

This is a disclosure of the magnificent and sublime design contemplated by God through means of the Gospel. It is the 'mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.'* Our own individual salvation constitutes but a fragment of a vast and glorious scheme, which in due course shall be fully achieved. Even the salvation of the whole church, or of all the elect, is to be regarded as but a means to an end—that end being far more comprehensive, and in a sense complete and universal, since it consists in the 'gathering together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.' The influence of that atonement to which we owe our redemption is here seen extending

* verse 9.

itself far and wide in the universe of God, and forming the grand harmonizing and uniting bond among all the objects, however various, of his goodness, mercy, and love. Nay we are perhaps here taught that its power is to be exerted and displayed in the final subjugation of all things without exception, including the reduction of sin and evil to their own place, as well as the ingathering of all that is good—under the universal sovereignty of God.

Such glimpses as the Apostle here gives us of the vast and the illimitable, in connection with the work of redemption, though they may be but imperfectly understood, are fitted not only to enlarge our minds, but to benefit our hearts. Whatsoever draws us out beyond ourselves, or the immediate sphere in which we move, helps to expand our feelings, and may give impulse and zest to our activity, from the reflection that our influence has a wider scope than we at first thought, and that we are filling up a necessary place, in a vast and complicated, but at the same time, unique and harmonious whole.

The dweller in some large metropolis who has never passed beyond a street or two from his own home and place of trade, will be liable to all the contracted or local feelings of a limited neighbourhood. It would do him an immense good if he were conducted to the top of some observatory, where the whole city in all its magnitude, and in all its variety of business and trade and occupation, should lie mapped out, as it were, at his feet. Old and isolated notions might be sent to the winds. New, expansive desires and impulses might come in their place. The countryman who has never gone beyond the neighbouring ham-

let, imagines that the whole world is contained within his own horizon, and with difficulty allows that the sun shines any where else. It would do him much service, if he could be lifted up, far above this solid globe, where he might see at once, with his own eyes, its vast extent, and how that no part of it is hid from the light and heat of that monarch of day; or, still farther, where he might behold the whole solar system and all the planets, illuminated from the same source, and pursuing their journey, along with the earth itself, around the same centre. Such a view would not be lost on him; and you can even imagine it to effect a complete revolution in his prospects and plans in life.

Now Paul conducts us, here, into a position where we may obtain a glimpse, at least, *of the whole city of God*—the New Jerusalem which John saw ‘coming down from God as a bride adorned for her husband’*—the new heavens and the new earth, when the first heaven and the first earth have passed away. He connects this consummation with the Redemption of Christ, and shews that it is the purpose of God, by the means of the gospel, to bring it to pass. The sun of righteousness, which has arisen unto us with healing in his wings, is beheld exerting his illuminating and harmonizing influence not on us only, nor upon this world alone, but, in a sense, universally: for, says the Apostle, it has pleased God ‘that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, *even* in him.’

* Rev. xxi. 1-2.

I. There is a general plan or scheme, promoted by the gospel, and here called '*the dispensation*' or economy '*of the fulness of times*.'

It is, with reference to a plan, or dispensation, or economy, which God has in view, that he has made known to us the mystery of redemption. The redemption purchased by Christ and applied to believers, has respect to a grand comprehensive scheme, or is a means towards its accomplishment; and this scheme is called the '*dispensation of the fulness of times*.'

Every intelligent householder has some plan, according to which he directs all his energies and lays out all his arrangements. His house, his farm, his estate, are managed and controlled for some definite object, and all his operations are conformed to some view or idea which he has formed for his own guidance. Different seasons of the year and various times come round upon him, but he keeps intelligently and firmly to his ruling purpose, and is not satisfied until the result of his plan has been fully realized. So God himself, in the government of his whole household—the universal Father, and the Lord of all—is represented as having a certain plan or economy, in accordance with which he is pleased to work through successive times, until the result he contemplates be finally attained.

It is apparent that every department of God's works of creation has been constituted upon some plan or scheme which secures unity whilst it admits of diversity; and when you take into view all the various departments of creation, it is still apparent that there are certain general laws of an all embracing

character, which form a kind of economy of nature binding all its parts into one harmonious system.

So, likewise, in reference to the history of mankind, as developed under the providence of God, it is manifest to every thoughtful individual that it admits of being divided into successive periods, or times, or stages, in each of which we detect some leading feature, some characteristic element, some plan or economy, in short, in accordance with which all the various events belonging to it have been evolved and under which they may be described.

And when all these successive periods have been completed, and the last of them has finished its appointed course, then *one general plan or scheme* will have been fulfilled, and be seen to have run through the whole, binding together all the parts, and bringing out *one grand and comprehensive result*. There is an economy of the whole as well as an economy of each distinct period or time. And this, as it appears to me, is what the Apostle intends us to understand by the 'dispensation' or economy 'of the fulness of times.' This, we must observe, is altogether a peculiar phrase. It occurs no where else in Scripture. We have indeed in Gal. iv. 4, a similar expression, where it is said 'But when the fulness of time was come God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.' The phrase there, however, is, 'the fulness of time,'* not as here 'the fulness of times,'† and the idea seems to be, in that passage, simply this—that when the set time was come—the time foretold and looked forward to, with so much of hope, by

*Χρονον.

†Καιρων.

the Jewish people, as the time of salvation and enlargement to Israel—when all types and shadows should be fulfilled, then God sent forth his Son. But in this place, the idea seems to be, that there is a dispensation or economy of *all* times, which the Gospel, or the discovery of the plan of redemption, is designed to promote, or with which it is essentially connected, and the consummation of which has not yet been accomplished. The Apostle evidently does not speak of the advent of Messiah or the incarnation of the Son of God, or the commencement of what may be called 'the Gospel age'; but of a grand and comprehensive result which the Gospel itself in its whole course from first to last may be, and doubtless is, the great means of achieving. This he calls 'the fulness of times'—as being that which *fills up or pervades and embraces all times and in which all times, or stages of time, are fulfilled.*

Now, the plan of redemption, or the gospel essentially considered, was commenced immediately after the fall. God entered then on his gracious work of recovering fallen man, having respect to the atonement of Jesus Christ his Son which had been purposed and ordained beforehand. Through successive ages he carried on that work, whilst yet the principles of his procedure were not disclosed either clearly or fully. It remained 'a mystery'* how God could be just and the justifier of the ungodly. This was 'the mystery hid from ages and from generations.'† At length, in the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son—and, his work of sacrifice and propitiation effected, a full explanation of the difficulty could be rendered,

* Rom. iii. 25. † Col. 1-26.

and the way of salvation be made more plain and evident. Now the gospel age runs its course, and the mystery of redemption, disclosed and unfolded in clearest light, addresses itself to all nations and people, as the chariots of salvation with its heralds fly with all speed to the ends of the earth. And the earth shall yet be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the seas. But beyond even the Gospel age, we must look for 'the fulness of times.' An economy having reference to all ages and times will then be fulfilled and the work of redemption will have accomplished its glorious results.

Looking to the history of our world as portrayed in Scripture, we are somewhat disposed to reduce its successive ages or times to four grand periods corresponding to the seasons of the year.

In the *first* place you have the *winter* of this world's history—a long and dreary age of two thousand years ushered in by the fall and terminating with the deluge. During that 'time'—an appropriate sequence of the sad apostacy—the darkness of spiritual ignorance prevailed, the knowledge of God gradually vanished, and the wickedness of man became great on the earth. The seeds of the Gospel had indeed been sown in the primeval promise; but they lay dormant and lifeless for the most part. Some heavenly light shone forth in the lives of a few who walked with God. The knowledge of worldly art or science may even have flourished. But such at length was the moral desolation of mankind that God determined to sweep them away, save only eight persons, by the waters of the Deluge.

The earth *next* appears renewed as by the face of *spring*, and from Abraham onward to the Messiah we have another 'time' of the same length, i. e. two thousand years, during which the seeds of the Gospel spring up and spread out into a large field of elementary knowledge, embracing types and shadows, ceremonies, and sacrifices—whilst, nourished thereby, we find a long range of godly witnesses, whose number cannot be told.

With the Messiah commences, as it were, the *summer* time of the world. The sun of righteousness has risen in all his splendour and power. The light of the world has come, and the full influence of the word of God begins to exert itself far and wide.

Another two thousand years have not yet run out, but already the fields are white. Knowledge has increased and men run to and fro all over the earth. Millennial days seem hastening, and then the kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

Last of all we have the *autumn* or harvest time. Then cometh the end, and that which John saw is realized, 'Another angel came out of the Temple crying to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.* That is realized in its full and final import according to the plain statement of our Saviour, 'The harvest is the end of the world.† 'The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there

*Rev. xiv. 15. †Matt. xiii. 39, 41.

shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.'

Throughout all these times—with whatever minor divisions or epochs you please—God has been carrying out a general economy. There are wheels within wheels—times within times—but one grand comprehensive plan encircles all. It is the dispensation or economy of the fulness of times; for the result contemplated enters into all times, and all times contribute their portion to its fulfilment.

II. What, then, in the second place, is this grand result, contemplated by the dispensation of the fulness of times. It is '*to gather together in one all things in Christ both which are in heaven and which are on earth even in him.*' But what are we to understand by this? What is the import of '*to gather together in one?*' And what may be the full scope of '*all things in Christ both which are in heaven and which are on earth.*'

There is little difficulty in arriving at the signification of the separate terms of the passage, although the meaning of the whole statement contained in it has occasioned much discussion.

The word rendered '*to gather together in one,*' occurs once again in Rom. xiii. 9, where it is rendered '*briefly comprehended.*' '*If there be any other commandment it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*' *There* its import is plain; for all the commandments are summed up '*briefly comprehended,*' '*reduced to a head,*' '*gathered together in one*' in those two great commandments—Love to God and love to man—of the last of which the Apostle

was giving instances. These two commandments are heads on which all the rest depend; from which they hang; in which they are summed up. This idea of summation, representation, headship, seems to belong essentially to the import of the word, and must not be lost sight of in the passage before us, where we read of the gathering up in one of all things in Christ, both of which are in heaven and which are on earth. But as it is plain that 'all things' do not naturally belong to Christ, but on account of sin the things on earth at least, are in a state of alienation, separation, revulsion, we must here necessarily suppose that the word implies the idea of 'bringing back' from that state and gathering up into the opposite state of union, harmony, love. As the Apostle, then, in the passage quoted from Romans makes an intellectual summation, when after specifying some precepts of the second table, he cuts short his enumeration and reduces all to one head—'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,'—so in our text, by the use of this remarkable expression, it is probably intended that we should understand that God in the dispensation of the fulness of times will make, or is making, a moral and spiritual and also physical or material summation of all things, when by his wisdom and prudence and infallible power, he gathers up in Christ all things into a state of harmony and union under Him as their representative head.

Now this summation—this gathering up—this harmonizing and uniting in Christ as head, is of a very comprehensive character. It is of 'all things;' and the only limitation necessary in the case seems to be indicated by the clause 'both which are

in heaven and which are on earth.' There is no room for what is ordinarily called 'Universalism,' for there is no mention made of 'hell' or the region of woe. The language of Scripture elsewhere is decisive on that subject. 'The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment prepared for the Devil and his angels.' 'The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom, all things that offend, and them that do iniquity.'*

With this exception—an exception pointed at in the text, 'All things'—'both which are in heaven and which are on earth' may, we think, be understood in the widest and most comprehensive sense.

1st. The Angels may be included in this gathering together in one. Although the unfallen Angels do not stand in need of redemption from sin or misery, yet they need to be preserved from the risk of falling, and may well be supposed to owe their security and infallibility in some way to Christ. On this subject let me quote the words of Calvin. "Nothing hinders us" he says, "from affirming that the angels have been gathered together again, not from a state of error, but, in the first place, that they may adhere perfectly and immovably to God, and in the next place, that they may retain their 'status' for ever. Who will deny that the angels have been reduced into a firm order under Christ? for men had been lost, but the angels were not beyond danger."† "For two reasons it behoved angels also to be reconciled with God—for since they are creatures they were not beyond the danger of falling, and would

* See Appendix—*Universalism*. † Calvin on Eph. i. 10.

not have been confirmed unless by the grace of Christ. Then in their obedience which they render to God, there is not such an exquisite perfection that it could satisfy God in every respect and without the slightest flaw.”*

But whatever there may be in this—that the angels share the fruits of redemption in their confirmation and perpetual stability—there are other reasons for including them in the ‘gathering together’ of the text. During the whole course of the gospel—the period of redemption—they are Christ’s ministers, working under him for the great ends which he accomplishes. ‘Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?’ Then as part of the honour pertaining to Christ’s exaltation, they are put under him as their head. This is plain, from this very chapter—vs. 20-22. Christ is declared to be set at God’s right hand in heavenly places, ‘far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church.’ This is a headship acquired by Christ—as God-man, raised from the dead and exalted at God’s right hand; and under this headship the angels are expressly included. It is part of the great plan, therefore, of God, effected through the work of redemption—of the economy of the fullness of times—of all times—to reduce the angels into one body with redeemed sinners, under Christ, the Head.

2. There is no question concerning the including, or gather-

* Calvin on Col. i. 20.

ing up, in one, all the redeemed of mankind. Separated though they may have been in life—according to the times in which they have existed—the countries they have dwelt in—the names and outward distinctions they have borne, their union to Christ, and to each other, has been real. It will, at length, become visible. ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.’* Even *now* this is the case. It will be made manifest when God’s plan is accomplished, and ‘a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues shall stand before the throne, and before the Lamb clothed with white robes and palms in their hands.’†

3. But in the third place, it seems intended in this passage, as it is in keeping with the representations of Scripture elsewhere, that the material creation is to share in the glorious ingathering of ‘all things in Christ.’

The language used ‘all things both which are in heaven and which are on earth’ seems to be adopted in order to embrace *both* persons and things.‡ A restoration to harmony, peace, and blessing, from the effects of sin and whatever disorder has crept into the creation of God, is certainly accomplished by the redemption of Christ. ‘The creation itself,’ says Paul in Rom. viii. 21, ‘shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption unto the glorious liberty of the children of God.’ ‘And I saw a new heaven and a new earth,’ says John, in Rev. xxi. 1, ‘for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.’ ‘But

* Gal. iii. 28. † Rev. vii. 9. ‡ According to the Greek.

the heavens and the earth which are now,' says Peter, in his 2nd Epistle iii. 7-13, 'by the same word (of God) are kept in store reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.' 'In the day of the Lord'—'the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat,—the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.' The language here used may be regarded as indicating only a purifying process—a shaking of things—a breaking up of the old constitution of things—under the powerful agency of fire. 'Nevertheless,' adds the same Apostle, 'we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.'

We have thus, not to enlarge, a very broad basis in Scripture testimony for the opinion, that this earth and the heavens above, i. e., the whole material creation, shall undergo a renovation, or be reconstituted under a new order of things in connection with the final blessedness of God's redeemed church. All things, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, shall be gathered together in one. A bond of harmony and union will be established, a state of indissoluble order and perfection will be created, *throughout the whole works of God*. There shall be no more curse. The former things shall be done away. Universal peace, and order, and beauty, shall reign for ever and ever; and holy angels, confirmed in their state, together with ransomed sinners, and a renovated creation, all gathered up into one harmonious whole 'in Christ,' shall proclaim the fulness of times arrived and secured, and God's all-embracing plan accomplished.

III. In the third place, this gathering up of 'all things' is '*in Christ,*' even '*in him.*'

The Apostle gives emphasis and importance to the fact by repeating it twice; that our attention may be more vividly fixed on Christ as the pledge and seal of that final restoration—the bond of that indissoluble and glorious harmony.

We are taught to recognize in the *person* and *headship* of Christ the security for this result being attained.

1st. Consider the wondrous Person of Christ as the God-man, joining mysteriously the Creator and the creation—the Maker and his work in one—by an indissoluble and eternal union.*

Christ is not man made in the image of God, but the Eternal Word who was made flesh. He is God himself in the form of man. He took to himself a true body and a reasonable soul. This human nature he carried with him into heaven, and he wears it for ever as part of himself. 'But this human nature is in itself an epitome of creation. It is a microcosm—a world in miniature. The elements of all things are found in it, from the atom that borders on nothingness, up to the spirit of angelic natures. Since then the Son of God hath assumed the human nature into union with himself—he hath actually assumed the elements of all things. He hath taken part of all to be part of himself. He is truly in his person the summation of all things, and thus they have all their representative portion in him.' There is thus made sure an actual conjunction or union of the creation with the Creator, and Christ be-

*Appendix C.

comes the pledge of the reconstruction of all that cannot be destroyed, and the bond of harmony throughout the whole of God's works.

2nd. But consider, secondly, that Christ thus completely fitted to represent the creation of God, by the assumption of the human nature, has been actually constituted head of all things, with all-sufficient power to accomplish the whole plan of God. He is head of angels—he is head of the church—he is head over all things. To bring in or gather up that portion of the kingdom of God which was given him, and which shares in the benefits of his redemption, as well as to drive out all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, is for him only a work of time; for all power is given to him in heaven and on earth, and he must reign until all enemies are put under his feet. In order to the gathering up of our text, there must be also a *gathering out* of all things that cannot be restored; and we see Jesus crowned with majesty and power, representing the whole that is to be gathered up into one; for he joins to himself, and clasps to his bosom, the virtual sum and essence of the whole, in his manhood joined to his Godhead; we see Jesus, I say, carrying out to the full the Father's purpose, and 'joining not merely angels with men, and world to world, but men, angels, and worlds, *all with God*;' whilst he finally subdues all unrelenting and irrecoverable enemies, and drives away to their own place all utterly hardened and impenitent sinners.

As head of his Church and of angels—as head over all things—he gathers up the entire ransomed and renovated universe,

and gathers out of it into some indescribable region of hopeless and irremediable evil, 'all things that offend and that work iniquity.'

'Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!'

We have thus endeavoured to bring out the true and full import of this remarkable passage. According to what we hold is its meaning, we are taught that God has a general and all embracing plan, which pervades all ages or times, denominated 'the dispensation of the fulness of times.' This plan, carried out from the first, will be completed at last in the end of time. The scheme of redemption is the means by which it is achieved. But the plan and the scheme which accomplish it, are of a most comprehensive bearing. The proper and immediate subjects of redemption are sinners of mankind. Yet this does not prevent angels and the creation at large from being benefited by it in some very important way. All things are, in fact, reconciled together, and brought under one system of perfect order, harmony, and love. There is no exception—save only that sad exception which Scripture elsewhere plainly makes, and which is here also, perhaps, implied—in the rejection or casting out of wicked angels, and impenitent sinners. But omitting these, as not in any proper sense at all included in or represented by Christ, what a glorious future opens up before our minds when time is no more, and eternity begins

its solemn state ! Then evil has ceased, for perfection has come. The Son of God has wrought out the problem, and evil whencesoever it came is reduced to an abode by itself, and nought shall trouble in all God's holy temple. Then shall God be all in all, and man united to God through Jesus Christ shall become partaker in His glory and blessedness.

Meanwhile the all important matter for each of us is, Have we become partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ? We trust it has not been our object at this time to deal with divine truth as a mere speculation. On the contrary, we desire and pray that you may be truly affected and impressed by it in your hearts. The design of the spirit of God in revealing to us this glorious view of God's great and magnificent plan in redemption is surely that we may be not only instructed thereby—but edified and built up in faith, love and holiness. Two important questions are, therefore, evidently suggested by this subject. First, Have we been gathered up and united with the one head of the Church, Jesus Christ? Has God's gracious plan embraced us? Is there one reading this, who will not take this question to heart, and try the state and character of heart and life until it be answered? Second, Are we become fellow workers with God in seeking to gather up others also unto Christ? Many live for themselves, and for time. Let each ask his own conscience, For what do I live?

May God add his blessing.—AMEN !

LECTURE VIII.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—11-12.

"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

"That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ."

In the verse immediately preceding this passage, the Apostle sets forth the grand and glorious design of God, by means of the Redemption of Christ, 'that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.' To unite and harmonize all things in and under Christ, is the eternal purpose of God, accomplished by a plan which is carried on through all ages of the world's history. The Apostle connects his own salvation, and that of all believers, with this general and all-embracing scheme, of which it forms a part. He would have us to realize the greatness

and glory of that redemption, the blessings of which we share; together with the final grandeur of His exaltation in whom we have trusted.

Our blessed Lord had intimated to his followers, when about to leave them, that such a result was destined to be brought about, 'when the son of man should come again in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.'* He had alluded to the same thing in the presence of Caiaphas. When adjured to tell whether he was the Christ, the Son of the living God; his reply was: 'Thou hast said; nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter, shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'† He was not believed; on the contrary, for this as well as other offences, he was condemned as worthy of death. But he had promised to send the comforter to convince the world 'of righteousness because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.'‡ His resurrection and ascension, made sure to us by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, form the evidence that he will come again and judge the world in righteousness, and bring about that state of ultimate glory and blessedness, which is the design of God in the dispensation of the fulness of times. To show, however, to his humble and believing followers whom he was to leave behind—that such a glorious result was not so sublime or transcendent, but that they might personally look forward to it with hope and comfort, our Lord, in language full of condescension and tenderness, assured them that their interests were bound up or identified with the final accomplishment

* Matt. xxiv. 30. † Matt. xxvi. 63-64. ‡ John xvi. 10.

of his work hereafter. ‘Let not your heart be troubled,’ he said, ‘ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also.’*

The Apostle speaking to us in the Spirit, shews us that he *recognises* the grandeur and magnificence of the Almighty’s purpose by means of redemption, and the honour and glory reserved for Emmanuel, as the Head in whom all things are to be gathered together—and he shews also that he *realizes* his own and believers’ interest in that result, however grand and glorious it may appear. ‘In whom also we have obtained an inheritance’ he says, ‘according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.’

We propose in this lecture to offer a series of observations suggested by the words of our text, as they stand in their natural order.

I. We remark, first of all, with the view of shewing the connection of the passage before us with the previous context, that *He* in whom sinners believe for their salvation *is the most glorious and powerful being in the universe of God*. ‘All things are to be gathered together in Christ even in him,’ says the Apostle ‘in whom we have obtained an inheritance.’ The restorer of all things that are to be restored—the glorious head of a renovated universe is our Redeemer, in whom we trust. Paul had a very lively sense of the glory and power of

* John xiv. 1.

Christ. This had been produced in him by the supernatural grace of God. On his way to Damascus he was taught to think differently of Jesus—the God-Saviour of mankind—from what he had done before. He had known him, heretofore, after the flesh, but from this time henceforth he knew him no more after the flesh.* He had participated in the unbelieving and carnal views which were generally held concerning Jesus—but he then saw his glory as *the risen one*, and he felt his power. He knew from that time forth that although he had been crucified through weakness he had been raised in power, and that he reigned in glory. He felt that if it were only in accordance with his will Jesus could exert such glorious power in defending and supporting his cause and his people as would most easily destroy all his and their enemies; and the view which he thus obtained remained as a permanent impression on his heart and mind. Further the Apostle tells us of ‘visions and revelations of the Lord’—how he knew a man in Christ, doubtless meaning himself, caught up to the third heaven, into paradise, who heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.* But the constant and real source of his conceptions of the glory and power of Christ was the Holy Spirit, who shone into his heart to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. Taught by him at all times he had attained such an appreciation of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, that he counted all things but loss in comparison. The vision of the future unending Kingdom of glory rose before the Apostle’s

*2 Cor. xii. 1-2.

mind at all times, reconciling him to afflictions and sufferings in the cause of Christ, and even to death itself; for he had his conversation with Christ, and he saw that all power belonged to Him in heaven and on earth, ready to be displayed in accordance with his wise and holy counsel—to be exerted and restrained agreeably to His will who sees the end from the beginning. Having such an apprehension of the supreme excellence of his Saviour, he gave up his own interests for time and eternity into his hand—he believed and hoped in Him with implicit confidence. To whom else could he commit himself—if not to him in whom all things are to be gathered together? but *in him* he felt safe.

Now by way of making a fuller application of our last discourse on this part of God's word than was there made; let me here press on you to inquire if you have yet realized in any good measure that excellent glory and power which the Apostle discloses as pertaining to the Redeemer. When you consider the views which are common in the world concerning Christ, Oh, how far are they from the truth! Nay, how little is He even thought of at all, who is the restorer of the world—yea and of the universe of God! 'The light shineth but the darkness comprehendeth it not!' Then let us ask ourselves whether we have been enabled to realize and practically acknowledge the excellent dignity and honour and power belonging to the Redeemer? What will be the result if he is regarded in that light in which the Apostle holds him forth? It will be that we shall be drawn to him in fervent and loving trust. How worthy of such trust is he! Oh, if we had only a glimpse of

the King in his power and beauty our hearts would surely be drawn to him! Is it so then with us? or are we filled with earthly cares and earthly pleasures, so that we see not and believe not in Him, who is head of Angels—head of his Church—head over all things;—on whose head are so many crowns? Unless we are united to him now by a living trust we cannot be gathered together in him hereafter—but will be gathered out of his kingdom as among the things that offend, and them that work iniquity.

II. Observe, secondly, our future blessedness is associated with the final triumph and completion of the Redeemer's work. *In whom we also, says Paul, have obtained an inheritance.* It is the future inheritance—'the inheritance of the Saints in light,' as it is called in Colossians—that he here speaks of. This is manifest from the succeeding context. It is not any blessings we now possess—the fruit of the Spirit's work on our souls, or the gifts and kindness of God's providence. These are evidences of God's love and grace and no doubt form an inestimable possession even at present. But the Spirit, in his presence in the heart, is only after all the earnest, as the Apostle tells us, (in verse 14) of our inheritance. So that it is clear that he is speaking in this connection of the heavenly inheritance in the state of glory hereafter.

Now the Apostle shews us that our future inheritance is *in Christ*, i. e., it forms part of that inheritance, which has been earned and is inherited by Christ himself—which has been granted to him by the Father as the reward of his labours, and is being 'gathered together' now, and will be finally secured

for ever and ever in his actual possession. He is the head and thus pre-eminently the heir—the heir of all things. Believers are members of Christ in particular, and therefore co-heirs with him. He occupies the rank of the first-born in the ransomed household of God, ‘He is the first-born of every creature’—‘the first-born among many brethren’—He is from eternity constituted the head of the family—that the younger members may be redeemed in time and finally ‘gathered together in one’ in him. And he is head of a whole ransomed creation. Shall we then let loose our imagination amid the realms of future glory—the inheritance of Christ—and allot to each of the brethren a separate portion as a kingdom of his own? Shall we thus distribute the Universe of God, with all its innumerable myriads of shining worlds? Or shall we confine the redeemed in their glorified state to ‘the new earth’ of that future kingdom of Christ? Into such matters it is idle and vain to pry. Speculation, where God has not clearly taught us, is of no practical value. But Christ hath told us that in ‘his father’s house are many mansions,’ that God’s faithful servants shall be made ‘rulers of many things,’ that they shall have ‘a kingdom,’ and that ‘the glory which the Father hath given him’ he will give to his disciples. They are to become sharers in all the inheritance of Christ, so that the good of no portion of it will be withheld from them; for so the Apostle teaches us elsewhere when he says ‘all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.’ The essentially spiritual character of the inheritance

must not be forgotten, as we thus contemplate the vast outward inheritance of the joint heirs with Christ. That, after all, would be no inheritance unless they had an actual possession of the Spirit in the heart. The outward heaven would be no heaven unless there were a heaven in the soul. The kingdom of God in this sense is within you and consists of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. This inward kingdom—this heaven in the heart—this essential inheritance of grace—will be perfected and completed when Christ's members are made meet for the outward kingdom or inheritance in glory.

And this is what chiefly concerns us to look to for the present; for 'the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.'

We might have dwelt at much greater length on the subject thus brought before the mind; but we must content ourselves by adducing one or two reflections suggested by the expression used in the text—'*inheritance*;' and

1st. It is implied in this that it is a good of a most substantial and enduring kind. It is worthy of the soul of man with all its cravings, aspirations and desires, when these, too, have been purified, ennobled, and strengthened in the highest degree.

The Apostle when he wrote this Epistle was in Rome, the capital and mistress of the world. It may be that it was from under the very shadow of Cæsar's palace that he addressed these words to the Ephesian Christians; for he speaks of his bonds in Christ being manifest in all the palace, in his Epistle to the Philippians, written at the same time. Paul the prisoner at Rome—the Gospel in contempt in the world's metropolis

—the Church of Christ under covert from open persecution—needed some strong consolation to bear him up against present despondency. But this he had in his firm hope in Christ, and looking out on the world's vain show and empty pageantry, gazing on the proud, but vexatious triumphs of ambition, and regarding even the boasted but unstable throne of the heirs of Empire, he can calmly and quietly, and in a spirit far above the feelings engendered by human passion, write to his brethren, 'in Christ we have an inheritance'—an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away—an inheritance exalting us to realms of eternal glory, where we shall dwell by the palace of him who is Universal Lord and enjoy the immovable peace and happiness of His presence. And the exhortation of our Saviour will here be felt, we trust, to be applicable to ourselves, however diverse may be our circumstances in the world. 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is there will your hearts be also !'*

2. The second reflection we would point out from the expression here used, is that our everlasting happiness is a free gift from God. It is an inheritance; and what can be less merited on our part than that which we inherit by the will and deed of another? Such is the state of the case with regard to our present and future redemption. All the blessings of salvation

* Matt. vi., 19-20.

constitute an inheritance, and it is bestowed by the mere grace of God according to his good purpose which he has purposed in himself.

As the inheritance is above all price which could be paid by us, so no price at all is required at our hands. The only price that could purchase it was of divine value, and was paid to the full by Jesus. He inherits it by the appointment and constitution of God. But he also merited it as the reward of his work. We, on the contrary, could never have acquired it, and if we have obtained a title to it at all, the praise belongs to the original grace and mercy of God, and to the ‘obedience unto death,’ which Christ rendered.

The only thing which we have merited or can merit in ourselves is punishment and death; but the inheritance we obtain in Christ stands altogether on another footing. ‘The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.’

III. Observe thirdly that the assurance which the Apostle here expresses comes through *faith* or *trust* in Christ.

We might have noticed specially that he is in these verses adducing the case of himself and other Jewish believers—who first trusted in Christ as instances of the fruits of redemption and an example of the gathering together in Christ, mentioned in the 10th verse, while he goes on to adduce the case of the Ephesians in the 13th verse as an instance or example of the same gracious work of God from among the Gentiles. He there says ‘In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation.’ In the text, v. 11, ‘We’

is evidently put in contrast with 'ye also' in verse 13. 'We' Jews who first trusted in Christ have obtained an inheritance, and 'ye also' Gentiles, as I am about to mention, have likewise obtained an inheritance. The including of both Jews and Gentiles in one under Christ, and their equal share as believers in the inheritance of grace and glory is a frequent topic in this Epistle. Christ hath made both one, having broken down the middle wall of partition. We need not however enlarge on this special observation; but rather let us direct your attention, as we have said, to the truth that the assurance here expressed of a right and title to the 'inheritance' hereafter, comes in Paul or others, through faith or trust in Christ. What can be more confident than his hope as here expressed? 'In whom,' he says, 'we have obtained an inheritance.' In Christ we have been made heirs. 'I know it,' says he in substance, 'I know it for myself, and as also my countrymen, my kinsmen after the flesh, who first trusted in Christ. I know that I and they are co-heirs with him. Nothing can shake my confidence that when the dispensation of the fulness of times is accomplished, I and they together will be among those who are gathered up in Christ and share his eternal glory.'

Now this is the language of assurance, or of such confidence as knows no doubt, wavering, or misgiving. It surely implies a state of the utmost comfort and the greatest strength. The individual who can truly express himself thus may well rejoice in the midst of tribulation, and can rise above almost any difficulty. *How desirable* were it for any one of us to possess such a firm persuasion of eternal glory! Is not the want of any

thing approaching to this assurance the reason why so many are comfortless in the midst of affliction, backward in the face of trials, lukewarm in the house of God, and it may be, cold and heartless in their home and dwelling? We speak of Christians—of those who may have ‘the root of the matter’ in them, but in whom it has not produced some of the richest flowers and fruits of Christian experience. There are many such. Nay, by far the larger portion of believers or Christians on earth, could not, we believe, use the language of the Apostle, ‘in whom we have obtained an inheritance,’ and we say that such a state of religion in the soul is far beneath what is desirable. Let any one ask himself if it would not produce a great effect on him—both in his personal comfort and outward usefulness—to be assured, like the Apostle, that he has obtained an inheritance in Christ. Would it not produce a mighty effect in any one of us if we had sure and certain grounds to believe that in a few years a rich temporal inheritance would become an actual possession? And if heaven be a place of holiness, and an abode of happiness—if it be a home of purest love and most exalted joy—if it be free from sin and free from sorrow—then, if I am assured of a place there, and an inheritance for ever within its blessed domains—surely now the effect will be most desirable—in restraining me from every unholy wish and action—in filling me with the most pure and heavenly thoughts and stirring me up to patience, fortitude, brotherly kindness and charity.

But we see that such a thing is not only *desirable* but also *attainable*. Here we have the example of the Apostle who ex-

presses himself in the language of assurance, as he does in another place when he says, 'I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that hour.'

This assurance is attained not by any disclosure of the secret purposes of God—not by any initiation into the divine decrees, but in such a way as is open to any one who believes in Christ and obeys his voice. If the Apostle had neglected to keep his body in subjection he would have been a castaway—and surely if he had been guilty of such neglect, he could not rationally have entertained the hope of eternal safety. But many Christians besides Paul, and more especially those like Paul, called on to testify for Christ and engage in some great work of labour and trial in his behalf, have actually had much of this assurance, and have rejoiced in the midst of their labours, in hope of the glory to come.

Thus, it is said, the Reformers of the Church from Popery enjoyed much of this assurance.

Thus also many a private Christian subjected to privations and sorrows has possessed the joy of assurance, fed and sustained by the secret oil which the Holy Spirit poured into the heart.

If then such a thing—so full of comfort and animation and zeal, be attainable,—how may it be attained? The reply to this is couched and indicated in the clause of our text where 'trust' or 'hope' in Christ is spoken of as the distinctive characteristic of those who possess this assurance. 'We' have obtained an inheritance, 'we who first *trusted* (or hoped) in

Christ.' Assurance grows out of faith as the flower on some lovely plant of a foreign clime. And we have seen such a plant kept for many a year with all care, and apparently in a state of the utmost freshness and vigour—its stem was strong and its leaves were green, and its whole frame was full of sap—yet nevertheless refusing to effloresce; and it might at last die of age without ever putting forth a flower, or doing so only at the most advanced stage of its life, and when hope had almost entirely vanished.

Thus it often happens with the faith of a true Christian. Though naturally tending towards assurance, yet this may fail or only come after a protracted period. And we are not to suppose that this assurance or complete confidence and persuasion so belongs to the essence of faith, but that a true Christian may be without it in his experience. We read concerning Gillespie, a man eminent not more for his learning—so that he had a prominent hand in preparing our Confession of Faith, and in particular dictated that remarkable answer to the question, 'What is God?' in our Shorter Catechism—than for his fervent piety; concerning him we read, that he departed to glory with a strong faith of trust in his Saviour, but without any thing of the assurance of faith or of 'sense' in his own interest in the inheritance hereafter. Faith in him had been lively and healthy, but had never effloresced into the assurance which Paul here expresses in his own name, and that of his fellow-countrymen, who first trusted in Christ.

But if this assurance be, as we have seen, both desirable and attainable it comes to be *our duty* to seek after it by every

Scriptural means, and it is laid upon us as a duty in several exhortations in Scripture, which at the same time point out to us the way in which we ought to aim at it. Some may suppose that a firm and immovable persuasion of our own salvation, or of 'our portion in the inheritance in light,' can only be obtained by our knowledge of our own election, or by a full and miraculous revelation of God's secret purpose. But this is not the case. It is the product of a living faith, putting forth its energy in a holy and active life in every good work. It comes of grace and of the Holy Spirit, no doubt; but at the same time of 'faith and virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and goodness, and brotherly kindness and charity,' for 'if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.'* It is by diligence in cultivating the graces of the Spirit that we are directed to look for assurance and not otherwise. 'Wherefore the rather give all diligence,' says Paul, 'to make your calling and election sure.' 'And we desire,' says Paul, 'that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.'†

IV. We have occupied so much space already that we can only refer in the most cursory manner to the remaining portion of our text. It is the less necessary however that we should dwell at any length on the topics contained in it as these have been either handled before, or may yet in the course of these lectures.

You will observe that the Apostle, from a personal assurance

* 2 Pet. i. 5-10. † Heb. vi. 11.

of the future inheritance, expresses his conviction in his predestination by God in the past eternity. 'In whom we have obtained an inheritance, being *predestinated*, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things, &c.

The assurance of the future inheritance, and a persuasion of personal election, or predestination, are very closely connected. But it is important to consider in what way and in what order these things are reached. Many perplex themselves most needlessly and hopelessly by reversing the order in which things stand to each other. Thus, instead of giving all diligence in cultivating faith or trust in Christ, with its fruits of knowledge and love, and so seeking to become assured, they would fain pry into the secret purposes of God, and demand at the very outset a knowledge of their own election or predestination of God. They reverse the order in which this knowledge is reached. If, like the Apostle and his fellow believers, they would begin by first trusting in Christ, and follow this up by diligence in the service of Christ, if they would thus work and labour as he did, starting from a prostrate and helpless condition, and relying entirely to grace, even the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they might find out at last their own eternal safety. For 'the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant.'

V. In conclusion, let us rejoice and give thanks to God, if we or any one of us can say with the Apostle 'in Christ we have obtained an inheritance,'—let us, I say, give praise and thanks to God who hath chosen and called us out of darkness into his marvellous light. 'All things are of God who hath reconciled

us to himself.' 'He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory.' And let us every one remember that God is Sovereign over all, that we cannot escape where his will does not reach, in some manner of operation or another, and that if we are not to the praise of his glorious grace by falling in with his merciful desire to save every one of us, 'for he will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth,' we must be to the praise of his glorious justice by suffering the doom which our sins have deserved.*

'Let the wicked' therefore 'forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon.—AMEN.

* 1 Tim. ii. 4.

LECTURE IX.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—13-14.

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.

“Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

The Apostle having in verses eleventh and twelfth brought forward the case of himself and fellow Jewish Christians, ‘who first trusted in Christ’ as one instance of the carrying out of the great design of redemption—‘to gather together in one all things in Christ’—now proceeds to another instance in the case of the Ephesian Christians who formed an example of that design being carried out among the Gentiles. ‘In whom ye also,’ he says, i. e., ‘ye Ephesian Christians—ye Gentile converts.’ According to the purpose and arrangements of God the ‘first in-gatherings’ were from among the Jews. Although the Jewish nation rejected the Messiah and the great mass of

the people refused to believe, yet the church of the New Testament was begun at Jerusalem, and its members were Israelites. The Apostles like their master were all of the seed of Abraham. The chief corner-stone and the foundation, were Jewish. The first lively stones in the spiritual house, were Jews. As the gospel of the grace of God must start from some centre or other, and some people or other must first be made acquainted with it, so it pleased God and it was surely most fitting and proper, that Jerusalem should be that centre, and that some of his ancient people should be the first to 'trust in Christ.' But now all ceremonial barriers are thrown down, the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is taken away, everything like a monopoly of the true religion is at an end; and the command is 'to preach the gospel to every creature,' 'that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in the name of Christ among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'* Up to this time, if we may be allowed a comparison, the sun seems to have stood still over Judea and Jerusalem, the light of heaven shone only on the favored land, and others were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death; but now the sun began to move from the place of his ancient confinement—the light of heaven is to shine on all the world and enlighten every nation and tribe, therefore he sets forth on his journey 'as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it; and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.'†

[* Luke xxiv. 47. † Psalms xix. 5. 6.]

Already Paul turning his thoughts towards Ephesus sees a flourishing Church of saints and faithful ones in Christ, and can congratulate them on their equal right and interest in the inheritance of glory hereafter with himself and others who first trusted in Christ; 'In whom' he says to them 'ye also *trusted or have obtained an inheritance,*' after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, &c.

In these verses the Apostle brings into view the means by which the Ephesians had come to the inheritance, or had obtained a title to it, and further he shews what are some of the present advantages enjoyed by those who possess that title, or who are the heirs of eternal life.

1. The Apostle here shews, how or by what means the inheritance is obtained; i. e, how any one comes actually to have a right and interest in it.

When speaking of his own interest in the inheritance, the Apostle's mind was occupied with a sense of that Sovereign good pleasure of God, which is the foundation of all grace and mercy, and he seized on the opportunity of rendering praise to that original cause of his salvation, 'In whom' he says 'we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.' And so he might have spoken with regard to the Ephesians, for they likewise had been predestinated unto the adoption of children. But he rather refers in their case to the *means* by which that had been brought about under God. He would speak with thankfulness of the reception which they had

given to the means employed for their salvation—whilst he points out the blessed fruits of Christian experience which they were already reaping, and the blessed hope reserved for them hereafter. They would themselves naturally refer all to the original purpose and grace of God ; for as the rain that falls on the grass returns again to the heavens in the mists of the evening and morning, so grace in the heart, invariably returns to God who gave it in humble acknowledgement of his Sovereignty and gracious good pleasure, the prime cause of all spiritual blessings.

But God works by ^{his} means. In the carrying out of Predestination—Election—His purpose purposed in himself He deals with man as a moral agent, and, without violence offered to man's essential freedom of will, he makes man comply with those means which being appointed by himself, when truly complied with, and followed out, lead most surely and even infallibly to the result which he has ordained.

When we come to consider these means of grace, we come within the field of what man may know and feel directly in himself. Here we find the material for self-examination and self-knowledge^r; for our state and prospect for eternity may be determined by the manner in which we have treated God's appointed method of salvation.

Paul can say to the Ephesians, I know your good state and sure prospects in Christ, 'for after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, ye believed in Christ,' and consequently as well as we have obtained an inheritance.

Now there are three means which he thus exhibits and sig-

nalizes as bringing about that gracious result in the case of the Ephesians. These are first, the word of truth, the gospel of salvation; second, the hearing that word; and third, the believing in Christ through the word. The first may be called the outward means, viz. the *word* read but especially preached; the second the inward means, *hearing*, i. e., the inward passage of the word through the sense of hearing and the intellect; and the third, the inner or inmost means, viz., *faith* which is a thing of the heart or soul within. This accords with the statement made elsewhere, 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' Here is a threefold cord not easily broken, by which man in a way suitable to his nature, is drawn effectually heavenward from the horrible pit and the miry clay, into which all have plunged by sin.

First, the outward means, the 'word of truth—the gospel of salvation.' The latter of these clauses explains the former. 'The word of truth' is 'the gospel of salvation.' But you must not suppose that by this is meant only the New Testament; for the Ephesians at the time when Paul wrote to them could not have possessed a written copy of the gospel, or of the New Testament as it was afterwards completed, and as we now possess it. We must conceive of the matter thus, Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, went in the providence of God among them; and we have it recorded in Acts xx. 17_&c. how he conducted his ministry for a period of upwards of two years, in order to their salvation. The scriptures of the Old Testament were accessible through the Jews that dwelt in the place. Grounding on these the apostle shewed the purposed and promised redemption of

sinner by Jesus Christ, and added his own inspired testimony, which he confirmed by signs and miracles wrought in their midst. He did not shun to declare to them the whole counsel of God. He preached unto them the Kingdom of God. He kept back nothing that was profitable unto them, but shewed them and taught them publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. In this way through the scriptures of the Old Testament and the inspired teaching of the apostle, the word of truth, the gospel of salvation was brought to bear on the Ephesians, and this was the outward means of their salvation.

Now we may be said to possess a greater advantage in this respect, than even the Ephesians themselves or any of the early churches of Christ. It is true we have not the presence of an apostle among us to testify concerning the resurrection of Christ and to teach us with the living voice, the truth of God. But we have what they wanted, the infallible teaching of all the apostles committed to writing. We have the word of truth in all its completeness, the entire revelation of God to man, in the Holy Scriptures ; and these are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Substantially we have with us both the prophets and the apostles, for though dead they yet speak to us, and will speak to all generations by their writings. This word liveth and abideth for ever. It is the truth of God for our salvation. It is the voice of God like as when it broke through the trees of the garden on the ear of fallen and consciously guilty and fugitive Adam, and in a tone

at once of complaint and compassion said, Adam Where art thou? Yes! to us the Bible is the voice of God, uttered through the medium of the holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, or by the Son himself called 'the word' and 'the truth' whose doctrine and sayings he himself caused to be infallibly preserved by his inspired apostles.

Thus it is God that speaks to us, even the Most High with whom we have to do. The word of truth is His voice, earnest and imploring, full of authority and yet of compassion, following man, a wanderer from Paradise, sunk in sin and sorrow, and in himself helpless and hopeless. Its burden is where art thou, O man? Thou hast forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and thou hast hewn out for thyself broken cisterns that can hold no water. Thou hast undone thyself, but in Me is thy help found. I might have left thee to thy choice, or visited thee only with just retribution for thy sins. But I have glad tidings for thee poor guilty miserable wanderer! What profit is it to Me that thou shouldst perish? I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he should turn to Me and live. Be it known then to thee that I have laid help on one mighty to save, I have sent forth My Son made of a woman, made under the law, to bear thy sins, make atonement for thy guilt and restore thee to thy right mind. Behold thy Redeemer! Return to Me through Him by faith and repentance, and thou shalt obtain the remission of thy sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

Such is the scope of the word of truth, the gospel of salva-

tion. Thus does the voice of God address to every one the message of life. The Sovereign condescends in this manner to deal with the rebel, whilst as a matter of necessity, as an actual reality, he retains in his own hand the power of life and death. But the voice of God does not single out this one and the other. It is addressed to all indiscriminately, and its command and entreaty is the same to all. 'The way, the truth, and the life' are held up to the world, that whosoever will, may return and be saved.

Hence *secondly* the necessity of hearing the word of truth, the gospel of salvation. This is the means by which the saving truth of God reaches the conscience and the heart. The glad tidings of a Saviour and all the testimony of God's word concerning him must be heard, and heard with attention and understanding, in order to his being exhibited to the mind and commended to the heart. 'How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?' Several topics of discourse might here be found, such as the necessity of the preaching of the gospel, the right of all to receive the word of truth, and the duty of every one to hear and judge for himself. But we cannot enlarge on these things at present. Let us however advert in a single sentence to our own position and responsibility with regard to this matter. It is manifest that we are somewhat differently situated from the Ephesians, to whom the gospel came by the lips of an inspired apostle. We on the other hand have the inspired writings of the Old and New Testament in our hands, and instead of infallible apostles, have ordinary ministers of the word, (such as Timothy, who was stationed at

Ephesus after Paul left it, or Titus who we read laboured at Crete), whose work is to build on the foundation laid, i. e., to explain and enforce the truth of God. This is an ordinance of God, who hath set in the Church, not only apostles and prophets and evangelists, but also pastors and teachers. In these circumstances God deals with each of you in such a way as to leave you under a serious and solemn responsibility, for according to the manner in which you treat the word of truth, it will be a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Designed for your salvation and fitted to accomplish it, the word must be intelligently and conscientiously heard, as a thing affecting your eternal welfare. You must remember that it is God's voice, that you are brought into contact with the mind and will of God, that Christ comes to the door of your hearts and knocks there by the gospel of salvation, and that the Spirit is thus striving with you by his gracious influences. How then is the word to be read or heard that it may become effectual to salvation? Let the familiar answer for the present suffice—'that the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer, receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.'

So, *thirdly*, had it become effectual to the Ephesians, who after they had heard, says the apostle, *believed* in Christ.

The truth had penetrated into their hearts, and there produced all those effects which at last resulted in a living faith or trust in the Saviour. How the word of truth, the gospel of salvation had operated, what process it had followed, what advance-

ing states of mind conscience and feeling, it had given rise to in the inner chambers of the soul, the apostle does not delay to specify. Certain convictions would be produced—convictions of ignorance, of depravity, of guilt. New light broke unto the mind on spiritual and heavenly things, setting before them in clear manifestation, God's blessed and holy nature, his righteous law, his inflexible justice, whilst heaven and hell were disclosed to view. The terrible dominion of Satan and their own bondage under him to sin, were revealed. Then the Deliverer, the Son of the Mighty One, was preached to them, nigh to justify, able to save to the uttermost. Seeing and believing all this, their hearts were at length moved in willing obedience to the gospel of their salvation. They submitted to the righteousness of God in Christ, and cast their own to the winds. They forsook dumb idols, and exalted the living God in their affections. Their backs were turned on sin, and the world, and their faces were set heavenward, and new creatures in Christ they became. Believing in Christ they were made joint heirs with Christ, they became fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

Now as I have said this faith in Christ is the inner or inmost means in the soul, of obtaining a right or interest in the inheritance of the saints in light. And there are several things concerning its nature and properties of which we would here remind you, although in the briefest manner. We have had already to consider more than once those doctrines which exhibit the part that God performs in the salvation of sinners. We have had to dwell on the statements of the inspired apostle

concerning God's *Electing Love*, as the fountain, origin, or first cause of our salvation ; on his *Predestination* to the adoption of children, or his infallibly appointing some to the inheritance of life and glory ; and on his *Grace* or free unmerited favour and mercy, as the only or chief reason of his procedure. We have had to contemplate the Redemption effected by Christ in accordance with the covenant of grace, a definite work co-extensive with the election and purpose of God. Further we have had to consider the revelation of his plan and purpose of mercy towards sinners which God has made by means of the gospel. All this is on God's side and brings our salvation up to the point at which it stands ready for man's acceptance. Hitherto God alone is the actor or agent. He Elects. He Predestinates. He Redeems by his Son. He makes known his grace and mercy to all by his Spirit in the word, that he may gather *some* unto eternal life. He declares that any and all who return to him through Jesus Christ shall be received. He commands all men everywhere to believe the gospel.

These doctrines are regarded by some as not practical. But what can be more practical than that which brings man into his true position in regard to God, and leads him to seek salvation at the footstool of the throne of sovereign grace, where alone it can be found? What can be more practical than a system by which the only salvation is held forth freely and fully for man's acceptance, and the redemption of Christ is brought to his door with urgent entreaty and command upon him to accept it and be saved? It is therefore at this point that we wish to direct your attention to some things relating to

faith, as that means by which you come to inherit all the blessings of redemption. First of all you must remember that faith is a *thing of your own*. It is an intelligent, conscious, voluntary act of the soul. Although it may be the work of God, it is the act of man. Produced by the Holy Ghost, it is performed by the sinner. It is the sinner that looks to Jesus—it is the sinner that accepts his proffered hand—it is the sinner that trusts to his gracious intercession. Humbled on account of his sins he welcomes the righteousness that exalts him. Reduced to helplessness he is made willing to embrace Christ as the rock of his strength. Loathing the world of sin and pleasure, he fixes his affections on Jesus the pearl of great price. In all this he is consciously himself. An unseen power may have been guiding and directing him—but, of this he is unconscious. What he knows is, that, having heard ‘the word of truth,’ the gospel of Salvation ; and having heard its gracious invitation, ‘seek ye my face’—his own heart replied ‘thy face Lord seek will I.’ It is to be observed then here that this act or operation of faith—by which the Sinner flees to and embraces Christ—is specially and peculiarly his own act or operation ; and therefore, grounding on this fact, we make an appeal to every one to *believe* the Gospel—to *trust* in Christ—to *recieve* his righteousness—and to *rely* on his grace. Apart from all other considerations as to the Sovereignty of God—his electing choice—his predisposing grace—his efficacious working in the heart—we must press on you to remember that faith is your own act—that you are commanded to perform it, and that your refusal to do so is a vol-

untary rejection of the mercy and grace of God—yes, of Christ the Saviour himself as he stands at your door demanding admittance. Oh then that ‘we heard his voice and opened the door, for then would he come in to us and sup with us, and we with him!’

We would here, however, remind you further that faith is a *thing of the heart* or affections as well as a voluntary act of your own. I do not intend to do more in the present connection than simply suggest some important considerations which need often to be repeated. And this is one, which I believe to be of vast practical value, that faith consists in a state of the heart or affections towards Christ, more than in anything else. It is not any amount of knowledge or learning in the doctrines of Scripture that constitutes faith. But it is such a ‘trusting’ or ‘leaning’ to the Saviour as betokens the complete reliance of the heart on him for salvation. The invariable antecedents of a true saving faith are a *sense* of sin and guilt—a *fear* of the wrath of God—a *desire* of pardon, peace, purity—and a *hope* of divine favour—all feelings or affections of the soul. Its invariable consequents are *love, joy, peace*, and such like states of heart. It were easy to shew that faith is essentially a thing of the heart. And the question then comes to a very simple point—which each one can consider for himself,—viz., have you given your heart to Christ? are you trusting—leaning, on him as your Prophet, Priest and King, as he is held forth in the word of truth—the gospel of your salvation?

I might also remind you, here, in one word that though faith may be a thing of the heart, it is not the less dependent

on the knowledge of the truth. It is far from being the case, that 'the more ignorance the more faith.' Faith does not trust blindly, but can use such language as this, 'I know in whom I have believed.' In short, we see that the method of God in saving sinners is to enlighten them that so as rational and intelligent beings they may come to Christ of their own free will and of their own accord. 'After that ye heard the word of truth—the gospel of your salvation ye believed in Christ.'

Having thus spoken of the means by which a title to the Inheritance is obtained—let me now pass on to consider the remaining portion of our text, where the Apostle exhibits to us

II. What are some of the present advantages possessed by those who have obtained that inheritance, and who are the heirs of eternal life?

The *first* of these is expressed in these words 'in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.' United to Christ by faith, sinners are sealed with the Holy Spirit. This blessing they receive after they have believed. The Holy Spirit is frequently promised in Scripture to be given to believers to dwell in their hearts and produce all the gracious fruits of holiness in their character and life. By referring to some of the promises where his operations are also pointed out, we will see why he should be called the Holy Spirit of promise, and *how* believers may be said to be sealed with the Holy Spirit. In one place he is promised as 'a Spirit of grace and of supplications,' and faith and repentance are among his gracious gifts. In another place it is said 'I

will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.* In short the Old Testament contains numerous promises of a like import, and refers to the Messiah's advent as the commencement of a new era, in which the Holy Spirit should be more largely shed, and his operations become more conspicuous. Our Saviour gathered up the scope of the Old Testament promises and confirmed the assurance of the gift in such enlarged measure when he said 'It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I go away I will send him unto you.' Accordingly this promise is made good to all believers, and for this end Christ died and rose again. 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.† Again it is said, 'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son unto your hearts crying Abba Father.‡

And what are the fruits of the Spirit and the evidences of his presence in the heart? 'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.'||

How, then, may believers be said to be sealed with this Holy Spirit of promise? I find that the expression 'to seal' is used in several senses in Scripture, corresponding to the different uses for which 'a seal' is employed among men. But we need

*Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27. †Gal. iii. 13. ‡Gal. iv. 6. ||Gal. v. 22.'

not refer to more than two of these senses, which may be said to embrace the others, and are included in the term as here employed. A seal is used chiefly for two purposes—for *safety* and for *evidence*.

1st. Believers are sealed and *made safe* by the Holy Spirit.

It is commonly understood that a seal, put upon a letter or document, secures it against detriment from any unfavourable quarter. The breaking of a seal would bring down the strong penalty of the law, on the offender. The seal of the Sovereign is the highest guarantee that can be afforded for the validity of any right, title, or possession, which a subject can enjoy. But believers in Christ are sealed by the Spirit, for they are secured against falling away by that Divine Person; and their inheritance is reserved for them in glory beyond the risk of loss. This seems the substance of what may be implied in the act or work of the Spirit, as far as safety is concerned. An *earthly* guarantee or security may fail—a human seal may be broken; but it is not so with *this* seal of the Spirit, whose omnipotent power and irreversible grace are engaged on behalf of believers to lead them to glory. ‘They are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.’* Whatever may be the strength and violence of enemies—the Devil, the world, and the flesh—believers are certainly preserved, i. e., sealed unto eternal life. Nothing can shake their title; for the Holy Spirit of promise, and *He is God*, hath put His own impress on them, and will watch over His own. Thus are believers secure.

* 1 Pet. 1-45.

2nd Believers are *evidenced* of the Holy Spirit as sealing them.

We might here, (but space does not permit) have adduced the passages of Scripture where 'the sealing of the spirit' may be elucidated.

A seal is used *for evidence*, as well as security.

Now we might illustrate this view at a considerable length; for it brings before our minds some of the most interesting and important states and conditions of the Christian experience. 'The sealing of the spirit' has been variously understood, even as evidence of a gracious state. The expression has sometimes given rise to *mysticism*; it may have been and probably will be reduced to the grasp of mere *rationalism*, by some.

Sober truth must lie between these extremes.

Now *as evidence* the spirit's *sealing* may have reference to three different judicatories—viz., that of God, of the believer himself, and of the world.

Before God, it may be thought that no evidence is required, since He is the originator and accomplisher of the salvation of all his people. 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.'* But, although not *required* for evidence, the Spirit's sealing must be regarded as God's marking out for Himself in an appropriate way, the objects of His eternal love. He recognizes and owns the Spirit's work. He acknowledges the Seal. *Before their own conscience* believers are proved on evidence by the Spirit, when he enlightens, strengthens, and enables them to appre-

* 2 Tim. ii. 19.

hend and rejoice in the marks of their own conversion, and thus stablishes them in the faith and obedience of Jesus Christ *Before the world* they are shewn to be God's people by the fruits of the Spirit abounding in them; by their patience and fortitude and perseverance; and by their endurance to the end.

Thus, in brief, they are *sealed*; and may well reckon this as among the chiefest blessings of their present condition.

The consideration of the Spirit as 'the earnest' we must reserve for our next lecture.

LECTURE X.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—14.

“Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

It requires something more than a bare word of promise to keep alive and vigorous the exercise of hope, during a long period of time, and in spite of adverse circumstances. This is true in regard to matters of merely temporal interest. Suppose the heir of some kingdom had been born and reared in a far distant country, where, amid poverty and contempt and oppression, he had been informed of his royal pedigree and legal rights, and actually held in his possession the valid title deeds of his kingly inheritance. Hope, eager and bright would at first—so soon as he understood his rank and destiny—fluctuate within his breast, and raise him above his present condition. He believes, on the best of evidence, in his valid, historical and legal title to the throne of his ancestors; and he feels that it is only a matter of time and policy, his coming

into the actual possession. But time rolls on and no communication reaches him from his fondly expected kingdom; and meanwhile he must struggle for maintenance and life amid the most untoward circumstances. Nay more, he learns of the existence and active endeavours of powerful foes who are determined by all means to thwart his claims and prevent his prospects. Depending entirely on the validity of his title—unable himself to make any efforts in its support, and in fact shut out from his kingdom by the intervening obstacles which there is no apparent way of removing—he yields in time to weariness, and begins to forget his once lively expectations. Time, with its wearing and tearing influence, and present cares and necessities with their engrossing power, reduce him to a state of apathy and indifference, and hope almost becomes extinct.

But suppose that in addition to his belief in the goodness of his title—as founded on documentary writings which he retains—there was sent to him each year, or at frequent intervals, some additional confirmation of his claims—suppose that in his distant banishment he reaped the smallest portion of his future revenues—suppose that he was assured that the utmost strength of his enemies would be of no avail against the will of his people to receive him in due time as their sovereign—then, despite all untoward circumstances, he can rejoice in his future kingdom as if it were already in his possession; and his hope is kept alive and vigorous. when otherwise it might have been ready to vanish entirely. Grant to him in his seclusion the smallest share of the actual honours belong-

ing to his inheritance and the most meagre portion of its riches, then his confidence is confirmed and his assurance is made strong. Now you have only to substitute the present case and condition of the believer in Christ, instead of the supposition made, and what applies to ordinary hope will apply, to a large extent, to Christian hope. For God is graciously pleased to superadd to his Word and testimony such assurances as enable the true believer and heir of heaven to hope against hope, and in the midst of adverse circumstances, to lift up his head.

In the present life the Christian must walk by faith, not by sight. He believes in the future inheritance on such divine testimony and assurance as God has vouchsafed. He sees not those mansions that are prepared in glory. He sees not yet all things put under Christ. He must still wait for the redemption of the purchased possession and the final restoration to be effected in Christ. He is sojourning, like Abraham, in a strange country. Here he has no continuing city, but he seeks one to come. He has fears without, and fightings within. There is much on every side to try his faith and patience; and there is need for strong help from on high to maintain his hope or raise it to any degree of brightness.

Now this help is actually granted in the gift of the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance. He is the comforter that Christ sends down to his believing people to dwell in their hearts and to make up for his absence; *He* is 'the earnest,' or first fruits, or the foretaste and guarantee of heaven. In addition to the promise of eternal life, which God hath given by his Son, even the word of truth—the gos-

pel of salvation—to wit, that whosoever believeth in the Son of God shall be saved, a substantial pledge is afforded to those who do believe, by the present spiritual blessings, wherewith God blesses them in heavenly places in Christ. All these are summed up and implied in the Holy Spirit, by whose Divine power they are produced, and together, they form an evidence, on the strength of which hope may become doubly hopeful, and assurance be made doubly sure. When Jacob's sons returned from Egypt they told their father, saying, 'Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt.' But the heart of the Patriarch, we read, fainted, 'for he believed them not.' When, however, they had told him all the words of Joseph, and when they shewed him the waggons which Joseph had sent to carry him, then the spirit of Jacob their father revived, and he said, 'It is enough, Joseph is yet alive, I will go and see him before I die.' Now every believer who is conscious of the presence and operations of the Holy Spirit in his heart and life, has an earnest of heaven, sent to him from heaven itself, affording him a sure proof of his own interest in that inheritance and also an actual foretaste of its joys. It is a portion, so to speak, of heaven let down into the soul, like the clusters of Eschol that shewed the children of Israel in the wilderness the fertility and richness of the promised land. The original meaning of the word 'earnest,' is a part of the price of anything paid as a security for the whole. It has been customary in many places in the hiring of servants to put into the hand a small moiety of the wages promised, which is received as a pledge of the engagement, and a security that the full

reward will be made good. It is therefore a most expressive term, and as applied by the Apostle here to the gift of the Holy Spirit, it suggests to us many important views of Divine truth, of a most practical bearing. Let us, then, direct your attention to some of these views as exhibiting the reasons, in detail, why the Holy Spirit is called 'the earnest of our inheritance—until the redemption of the purchased possession.'

By the enlightening and sanctifying and comforting influences of the Spirit, Heaven may be said to be begun in the Soul, as respects knowledge and holiness, as well as peace and joy and happiness.

1st The Holy Spirit *imparts heavenly knowledge to the mind*, and is thus the earnest of our inheritance.

(a) Heaven's glory will consist partly in the direct and full vision of God, whom the redeemed shall see, no longer darkly as through a glass, but 'face to face.' They will possess an immediate and intuitive knowledge of God in their minds, and as far as finite can comprehend the infinite, they will enjoy a clear preception of His nature and perfections, sufficient for their perfect satisfaction and blessedness.

This knowledge is the most excellent possession which the intellect of man can conceive. It is the loftiest the purest and the most comprehensive of all kinds of knowledge. Wise and earnest people in all ages have sought after it, although groping their way often-times in thick darkness. Man was made for it. By the law of his creation this is his possession or inheritance; and it is a proof of the fall of man that he is found generally neglecting it, and seeking pleasure elsewhere. This knowledge

is really the only treasure worthy of the nature of man and the purpose designed for him by his maker. 'Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me.'* &c.

We conceive that in heaven many mysteries concerning the nature and perfections of God will be unfolded—or at least will be put in such a light as to relieve the mind from many perplexities which it has to encounter and sustain in this life. There can be no doubt that most of the difficulties felt on this subject arise from the depravity of our nature—and the blinding influence of corrupt affections and desires. Men, removed from God in their hearts, are at a distance from him in their minds also—'having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.'†

What a piece of goodness and condescension is it on God's part, to give unto us his blessed Word, inspired of the Holy Ghost, as a means to dispel the darkness of our minds and bring us to the knowledge of 'the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, which is eternal life!'‡ Here the glory of heaven alights upon earth, dimmed it may be indeed by the earthly atmosphere, but still essentially the same. If God—the Spirit—is to speak to man, if he is to communicate the knowledge of God to us in our imperfect state, he must use the language of man—the language of earth; and he must also

* Jer. ix. 23 24. † Eph. iv. 18. ‡ John xvii. 3.

have respect to our weak capacities. In the Bible we have a clear and sufficient revelation of God—the living and true God—whom the wise of this world and the learned had failed, by their reasonings, to discover. This light is furnished by the Holy Spirit. And because man after all can have no true apprehension of God—for ‘the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned’—therefore He—the Spirit of God—is pleased to reveal God *in the minds* of those who believe (their faith being the fruit of this revelation) and so makes eyes within, as well as gives light from without. To be wise up to what is written in God’s Word is to obtain glimpses of heaven—sights of God as through a glass—true conceptions, as far as they go, of what will be understood in open vision hereafter. It is the knowledge of the child as compared with that of the man, as Paul represents the matter. ‘Here we know in part, and prophesy in part; we think as a child, we speak as a child. There believers shall become men, and have put away childish things; for that which is in part shall be done away.’ In this way, the Holy Spirit becomes as an earnest of the inheritance. It is only through the written word—which though it be as compared with all other sources of knowledge concerning God, like the clear light of the sun, contrasted with the darkness of night—yet compared with heaven, is only like the morning star, which is soon eclipsed by the splendour of the rising sun. Keep to the written word then, child of God! Seek the guidance of Him who indited it, even the Spirit of truth, coming forth

from the Father and the Son. Better be a child to learn and know as the Father is pleased to instruct and train, than a stranger and a heathen. To be a perfect man, at last you must pass through the stages of progress appointed for you. In this way the Spirit is more and more an earnest imparting light that shines more and more unto the perfect day.

(b.) Let us also notice another department of knowledge in which the Spirit so instructs believers as to become 'an earnest' of heaven. We refer to the method of Divine Providence, a subject full of high and profitable instruction, but often difficult and inscrutable.

In connection with the government of Him who doeth all things according to the counsel of His own will, we naturally inquire what are the reasons of supreme justice and goodness which regulate the various arrangements of Providence, and more particularly those by which we are ourselves affected. We see much to perplex us and are left as far as our own wisdom is concerned in mere conjecture or entire darkness. But the Gospel brings 'life and immortality to light,' and shews us that Providence is subordinate to Grace—that this world is preserved and governed for the sake of that 'kingdom of God' which shall survive the final dissolution of the earth and the things that are therein. Looking at things as natural men, we see, like Solomon, that one event happens to all, to the righteous and to the wicked, and that we 'cannot know love or hatred by all that is before them.' Guided by the Spirit of God, a believer understands the matter more fully and sees the meaning and intention of events which are only either common

affairs or inextricable riddles. He is often like David, in the first instance, astonished at the ungodly who prosper in the world, who increase in riches; and when he thinks of this it is too painful for him. But when he goes into the sanctuary, when he studies God's Word, and obtains the guidance of his Spirit—'then understands he their end.' He can say, 'Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary, who is so great a God as our God?' . . . 'Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*'

In Heaven there will be doubtless the amplest satisfaction obtained in reference to all that was hard or mysterious in the ways of Providence on earth. Then it will be more intelligently perceived, what is even now believed by every Spirit-taught Christian, that 'God is just in all His ways and holy in all His works.' Even in this life 'the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and He will shew them His covenant.' 'Unto the upright light ariseth in the darkness.' They have 'an unction from the Holy One and know all things.' They perceive how 'all things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to His purpose.' The Spirit, through the written word, enables believers rightly to interpret the dealings of God, and becomes to them like a pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, as they journey through the wilderness until they reach the inheritance—'until the redemption of the purchased possession.'

2ndly. The Holy Spirit *sanctifies the heart*; and is thus

* Psalm lxxvii. 13—20.‡

the earnest of the inheritance. As believers hereafter shall see and know as also they are known, so likewise they shall love as also they are loved. And as the measure of knowledge imparted by the Spirit now, is a foretaste of the light of heaven, so the charity produced in their hearts through the same Spirit and belief of the truth is the beginning of that perfect love which shall fill their souls in glory. How wonderful is the work of this blessed Spirit, 'who builds a temple for God out of the most unlikely materials.' Hearts, by nature hard as the nether millstone, are softened and moulded for an habitation of God through the Spirit. How unlike heaven is the heart of man—deceitful above all things and desperately wicked—cleaving to the earth and its pleasures—filled with selfishness, enmity, wrath, strife, hatred—a cage of unclean birds—a dwelling place of evil spirits! And what a change is accomplished when a sinner is 'born of water and of the Spirit! Then 'in the wilderness (of the heart) waters break out and streams in the desert. The parched ground becomes a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, is grass with reeds and rushes.'* All the regenerating and sanctifying influences of God's Spirit tend towards the perfecting of love, which is the 'end of the commandment,' 'the fulfilling of the law,' the sum and embodiment of all graces. When every thing is brought into subjection, into the obedience of Christ, the believer has a possession within himself, an 'inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away.' Now in heaven this will be realized. God shall reign

* Isa. xxxv. 7.

exclusively in the hearts of his redeemed people. No longer shall usurping gods intrude their solicitations, nor idolatrous thoughts go forth in quest of forbidden and hurtful joys. He who is love will fill their hearts and minds. He who is light will enlighten them, and He who is love will ravish them—and they shall be perfectly transformed. For this, Christ makes all prevailing intercession. ‘I have declared unto them,’ he says, ‘Thy name and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.’* This result will be accomplished by the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance.

The present effects of the work of the Divine Agent are seen in the love which he creates in the hearts of believers. This love is pure—essentially independent of gross outward carnal attractions, disinterested—rising up on the ruins of selfishness, enlightened—according with the dictates of truth, and so manifesting itself in hatred to all that is properly hateful, compassionate, nevertheless—forgiving iniquities and compassing the real good of immortal beings,—‘bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things.’†

Without the beginnings of this love a person is not yet ‘spiritual,’ but is earthly, carnal, selfish, devilish. Yet the perfection of it is not here, for that cannot be expected until knowledge is made perfect. The mind and the heart act mutually on each other, and as the best are liable to errors of the one they must often fall into sins of the other. What measure of pure and spiritual and godlike love any one possesses is a

* John xvii. 26. † 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

commencement only of the full and complete work of the spirit, when the temple of God in the heart is finished with shoutings of 'grace, grace,' unto it. Oh how great a treasure must the love, which the Spirit of God produces, be to every one in whose heart it dwells! Consider with what kind of benignity such a one can look around on his fellow men. Towards some his heart warms with emotions of sweetest charm—towards all he bears a good will founded on truth and justice. He succeeds in overmastering every rising passion of jealousy or envy, and retains his unruffled serenity in spite of the cruel opposition of his enemies. How cheerfully does he go to his accustomed duty, for he is serving his heavenly Father as he serves his generation and helps to plant or to water the church of Christ! With what patience can he wait for the result of his labours,—how calmly (yet not without eager and ardent longings) he leaves all consequences to God! How does his godliness beget a contentment which has no relationship at all to sloth or indifference or worldly comfort, but comes of an enlightened mind and purified heart! And hope, strong and bright—fighting if need be against hope—promises him rest for ever in the eternal inheritance. Such as have the love of God wrought in their hearts by the Spirit are surely, my brethren, in an enviable position. They are truly rich no matter what their outward state. Even now they are receiving such gracious and heavenlike honours as may make them rejoice in the midst of sorrows. Heirs of a heavenly inheritance and a crown that fadeth not forever, the time of their minority is lighted up by the Spirit who is the earnest—and already they have

some anticipation of the royal dignity and blessedness of the Kingdom which the Father hath given them in Christ.

3rd. The Holy Spirit is an earnest of the inheritance *by the peace and joy and comfort which he imparts to the soul.*

The essential elements of the Saints' inheritance, apart from any outward sources of heavenly riches, will consist in a full and perfectly satisfying knowledge of God and his works, in a pure and perfect love dwelling in their hearts, and in a constant and ineffable joy filling their souls like a river. The vision of God, perfect love, and boundless delight, will go together to make up heaven's happiness—light, love, joy,—a triune blessedness.

The joy of heaven resulting from the vision of God, and flowing through love, will not be light and momentary, not false and impure—such as is earthly joy, often speedily dissolving itself in sadness and grief, and leaving an aching void behind—but true and pure, ineffable, eternal, free from all admixture of tears, such as no one can take from us, for in God's presence there is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore.

Now the joy peculiar to the true Christian as wrought in him by the Spirit of God is of this heavenly sort, though in degree far inferior, as the first streak of early dawn falls short of the full effulgence of the meridian sun. Many things tend to curtail and impede the joy of the Christian. Remaining sin, evil in the world, the influence of a frail and dying body, the opposition of the wicked, and the temptations of Satan, often too successful, all conspire to drown the heavenly flame.

But, notwithstanding, it is maintained by secret oil—the oil of love poured by the Spirit into the heart. Peace flowing from the pardon of sin realized, the assurance of God's gracious presence, and good hope of eternal life, are the chief elements of the Christian's joy and comfort on earth. Thus an earnest of heaven's happiness is obtained, for it is essentially joy in God throughout. It forms an instalment of the large and rich recompense of glory—the first fruits of the promised land. They who have enjoyed true peace of conscience and any degree of true assurance cannot fail to recognize the source of their joy, and to identify it with heavenly blessedness. Oh that more of us had such solid peace and comfort now, so that we could say, 'behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the Sons of God. *Now* are we the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.'

We have thus endeavoured to shew how the Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, by producing in the souls of believers light, love, and joy, of a kind the same as in heaven, though in degree immeasurably inferior. We have been guided in our endeavours mainly by the general truths of Scripture, as well as what we gather from the same source concerning the genuine repentance of God's people. This earnest *is heaven begun in the soul*; and we may say in general that unless heaven is begun now, in this sense, it will never be enjoyed hereafter. It is to be feared, my brethren, that very few among us can say that they possess this earnest of heaven. How many are there, on the contrary, who, in a diseased and sadly

troubled conscience, which as long as it is awake gives them no rest, and in the movements of selfish passions and ungodly desires, and in the dimness and darkness of their minds through unbelief, have too plain and obvious a presage of the misery of an undone eternity ! How dismal is it to carry about in the conscience and heart the very elements of hell—the fuel which only needs to be fanned into a flame to burn with unquenchable fire ! Oh, if there be any in that sad condition let them take warning in time and flee to the hope set before them in Christ. Those who have a troubled and guilty conscience, and whose hearts are the lodging place of selfishness, with all the evil passions which it begets—let them say why such a state may not be perpetuated and aggravated into all the awfulness of misery associated with the name of hell ! And there is only one way of escape ! Let them seek to be renewed in the spirit of their minds in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God !

Ye who are so renewed, see that ye be diligent and watchful lest ye fall into temptation ! but rather ‘walk in the Spirit,’ and serve God faithfully ; ‘for He is not unmindful to forget your work and labour and love,’ but will send forth His Spirit unto your hearts, and give you to taste of the heavenly inheritance, and will bring you at length into its actual and eternal possession.—AMEN !

LECTURE XI.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—15-20.

“Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers,” &c.,—to v. 20.

In the previous part of this chapter the Apostle discloses those spiritual blessings which flow from an interest in God’s love and grace in Jesus Christ, and to which the Ephesians had been introduced.

Already partakers of the covenant mercies of God in point of fact, and also in the conscious enjoyment of them, these living Christians command the genuine sympathy and believing prayers of the Apostle, as he declares in the remaining portion of the chapter, on which we now enter.

I. In endeavouring to open out to you this passage, we may first of all dwell for a little on the Apostle’s sympathy with the Ephesians, and the manner in which it expressed itself.

We need not wonder that Paul, who had been the means of

planting the church at Ephesus should feel the greatest solicitude for its after prosperity. Indeed Paul's care for all the churches was one of the most remarkable features of his character. His happiness was identified with their welfare. Writing to the Thessalonians he says, 'Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress, by your faith; for now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord; for what thanks can we render to God, again, for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before God.*' In regard to the Ephesians he had parted with them finally, in a very touching and affecting manner—and in his confinement at Rome his heart continued to yearn over them with all the fond affection of a 'father in Christ.' The maxim "out of sight out of mind," though characterizing much that pertains to mere natural affection and worldly attachments, did not apply in this case; but rather, perhaps, the maxim "absence makes the heart more tender." Eagerly did Paul gather up and cherish whatever tidings came to him concerning his Ephesian church. Encouraged by the favourable reports he had received he hastened to express to them, by letter, his Christian sympathy. 'Wherefore I also,' he says, 'when I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the brethren, cease not to give thanks for you.' Sympathy such as this is capable of being appreciated only by those who have obtained 'like precious faith,' and love, and who know something of the influence which sanctified suffering and solitude, exert on the noblest affections of the soul.

* 1 Thess. iii. 7.

Most people, indeed, are filled with joy when they hear of the outward prosperity of their friends at a distance. What father or mother is there, who though drooping fast into the grave, will not have experience of renewed life by the tidings of a child's success in some remote part of the world? And what satisfaction will there be in such a case to find that the maxims of industry, perseverance, and prudence long ago inculcated are now yielding abundant returns of wealth and comfort! But it needs an enlightened mind and a renovated heart, to discern in the possession of 'faith and love,' a treasure better and nobler far than all the wealth of the world, and to trace the triumphs of these principles in the solid riches of a renewed character and the brightening hopes of a heavenly home.

There are some Christian parents who can thus rejoice over their offspring—who are their children by a twofold tie, by nature first, by grace last but not least; and who indeed have 'no higher joy, than to hear that their children walk in truth.'

There are some teachers of the young who can see the fruits of their labours in the after faith and love of those who have been their scholars. Ministers also, there are, who see the effects of their preaching and advice on every hand in their congregations—in the 'faith and love' of not a few. Let all these take example by Paul in the way in which he regards these things, and in his mode of shewing his gratitude. Let them value things at their worth. What signifies the want of outward wealth or grandeur? Why mourn and lament over a few small afflictions? *Faith and love* are more in value than

all earthly things, and with these we may well be content. Let them give thanks to God for gifts so precious as these—bestowed on those in whom they feel a deep interest,—and let their thanksgiving be unceasing. Let Christians be more on the outlook among their fellow Christians for the detection of these jewels of grace that they may have occasion to give thanks to God! Let one stir another up in this way, that there may be unceasing praises and thanksgivings to God on each other's behalf!

We might enlarge at considerable length on the two grounds here specified by Paul, on account of which he gives thanks to God for the Ephesians. A single remark or two, however, may suffice. The first of these, 'their faith in the Lord Jesus,' is to be understood as embracing a trust in Christ as their Saviour—Jesus—by which they were receiving him, and leaning on him for pardon and acceptance with God, and also a submission to him as their Master and Sovereign—the Lord—by which they became his servants and subjects, living for him and glorifying him in their whole conduct. True faith is the principle or spirit of a renewed heart. Hence its preciousness. (2 Pet. I. 1.)

The second ground is 'their love unto all the Saints,' which is a constant fruit of faith and an evidence of the grace of God. However varied in natural character and disposition, and outward circumstances the Saints, or Christ's people, may be, this love embraces all. Its universal character is a test of its genuineness. It does not allow minor differences and peculiarities, however unsavoury, to hinder its exercise, which depends on

the real existence of grace in others as a gift of God, and a harbinger of eternal union and harmony in heaven.

We shall also allude only briefly to two lessons bearing on Christians generally, from the words of the Apostle. *First*, we see from his statement that he was in the habit of stated or regular prayer—‘Making mention of you in my prayers.’ How often, or at what times the Apostle was engaged in prayer, we do not know. But that he regularly and habitually engaged in this exercise is legitimately inferred from his words. Is this the habit of all of us? Can we speak of our prayers as a regular habitual exercise? Many cannot; and even Christians are in this respect often too remiss. If we would follow the best examples we would have stated seasons each day for prayer; we might be able to say ‘my prayers.’ *Second*, we see that the same topic afforded unceasing matter in those prayers of the Apostle. He did not weary of rendering thanks for the Ephesians. How often is the sameness of topics a weariness in prayer! Ought it to be so? A desire of novelty ought not to influence us so much as a knowledge and feeling of what is or has been affecting our moral state and condition. Constancy is, according to our present state, and indeed necessarily, an evidence of sincerity. Perseverance is needful to give reality and fervour to our devotions.

II. At verse 17, we enter on the review of the Apostle’s prayer for his Ephesian Church, in its substance and import; which occupies the remainder of the chapter.

Observe again, *First*, the character under which Paul tells us that he was in the habit of addressing God in his prayers,

'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ—the Father of Glory.' He does not, he cannot approach the throne of Divine Majesty apart from the Saviour. By this way, however, he feels that he has access. The throne of Majesty becomes the throne of Grace. An aspect of peace and love is cast upon the seat of heavenly Power, and Justice, and Truth, by the Great High Priest. The God of our Lord will be propitious to us, and will surely grant our petitions.

There is here an appropriateness in the Apostle's view of God as the Father of Glory, considering the nature of the blessings for which he prayed. He is light, and in him is no darkness at all. He is the source of glory as well as the possessor of glory. From Him originally all true light of glory must emanate. 'The Lord God is a sun and shield. He will give grace and glory. No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.'*

Consider *now*, the burden of the Apostle's prayer. It may be said to include three distinct petitions. The first is, that God would give unto the Ephesians 'the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him,' v. 18—'the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.' The second is, that they 'may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' And the third is, that they may know 'what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe,' &c. These are three distinct topics. He prays that God would—1st. Give them spiritual enlightenment in divine things—the knowledge of himself;

* Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

2nd. Enable them to realize and appreciate their own hope and the future blessedness of the saints ; and 3rd. Discover to them the greatness of that power which made them believers.

1st. Consider his prayer, 'may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.'

The knowledge of God is the blessing which he here desires and asks for them. But had they not the blessing before? How could they be Christians or believers at all unless they knew God? True, but this knowledge is a boundless ocean—an inexhaustible mine of gold. The kingdom of heaven might be in some of them, nay all of them, in this respect, like a grain of mustard seed. What the Apostle prays for, is that their knowledge may be enlarged and made more effulgent.

Some degree of the knowledge of God is certainly necessary to salvation, and that degree, however small, which is of a saving kind, differs altogether in its nature, origin, and effects from the ordinary notions of mankind concerning the Deity. This is an important Scriptural truth. The true glory of God is not seen at all by unrenewed persons, even in the smallest degree. This is stated and explained in many passages of God's word. It is implied in many more.* 'This is life eternal to know the only true God and Jesus Christ.' 'Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace.' 'They that know His name will put their trust in Him.' But from the grain of mustard seed how lofty and expansive a tree may grow—in whose branches the birds of heaven may make their nests. Therefore it is most desirable that true Christians should grow in this know-

* John xvii. 3.—2 Cor. iv. 4-6.

ledge and that they should receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him for that great end. The Agent by whom this knowledge is granted is 'the Spirit of wisdom and revelation'—the Holy Spirit of God—for this is the special work of the third person of the Godhead. All saving knowledge is produced by Him. Every divine impression—every heavenly thought and feeling—all true conceptions of God in Christ, are declared in Scripture to come from the Holy Ghost, given unto us by God. Natural knowledge—the conceptions of unrenewed persons—the highest efforts of mere intellect, are represented as being of a different kind. It may be difficult to explain, in any way satisfactory to mere intellect, wherein the difference consists between the knowledge of God possessed by natural men, and that of spiritual persons taught by the Holy Ghost. We shall in vain seek to set forth that difference, by any intellectual dogmas concerning God—his nature and perfections—for such may seem to be capable of being understood by the mind of man, without any extraordinary or supernatural assistance. Any man might say concerning any proposition or dogma about God, if clearly expressed, 'I can understand that—there is no difficulty in comprehending its meaning.' Nor can it be said that the Spirit-taught individual understands the statements of Scripture concerning God, or Spiritual things in general, in any other sense than that which is the clear, obvious, natural sense of the language used. Scripture holds up the truth, and the whole truth to the eye of the world, or mankind generally. Nothing over and above Scripture is communicated by the Holy Spirit of wisdom

and revelation. But it is certain that knowledge of that truth in the true, correct, full, and effectual view of it, is beyond the power of mere intellect or human understanding. To know is more than speculation. It is to see, realize, apprehend, embrace. It involves the whole soul, and not merely the reasoning faculty and the memory. The heart or affections, the conscience and the will are all simultaneously engaged. Along with the mind, simply considered as intellect, the various faculties of conscience, and affection, and passion, concur—giving a consent to the truth and cherishing it with fervour, even until it glows up into all its brilliancy and glory.

The clause which follows, in the next verse, shews that this much is implied in the Spirit's work of illumination. 'The eyes of your understanding being enlightened.' But the expression used in the original for understanding is properly translated 'heart'—(Καρδίας). 'The eyes of your heart being enlightened' may indeed seem a strange figure of speech, but it is by no means without significance. Even a certain poet has said 'Tis near the heart the seat of vision lies'—in other words our apprehension or realization of any object of knowledge depends in no small degree on our affections. They give the hue and colour to our thoughts in general. Our conceptions of moral things, our apprehension of spiritual things, our knowledge of God require the operation of sound feelings—the clear steady gaze of a pure heart. There are eyes in the very core of our being. It is with these that we see things, and hence the grand difference between the natural and the spiritual man. The natural man is blinded by the world, which is

enthroned in his heart. The spiritual man is delivered from that bondage, and has a new faculty of knowledge in the highest sense—a knowledge in the advancement of which he attains to higher and higher life, until he comes at last to see as also he is seen, and know as also he is known.

This subject is one of vast importance. It belongs to experimental religion and receives its best illustration in the conscious wants, and gradually enlarging acquisitions of the living Christian. He knows what is the darkness of unaided intellect and what the glory of spiritual discoveries in divine things. Let me here quote (for the sake of enhancing the need of this prayer of the Apostle's, in our own individual case) from the recorded experience of one of the best and holiest of the sons of men—that of Jonathan Edwards, whose life, so far as known, is an awakening rebuke to the cold and heartless, the low and ineffectual religion of most in the present time. I shall give it at considerable length in his own words. “The first instance,” he says, “that I remember of that sort of inward sweet delight in God and Divine things, that I have lived in much since, was in reading these words—1 Tim. i. 17, ‘Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, for ever and ever, amen.’ As I read these words there came into my soul, and was, as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from anything I ever experienced before. Never any words of Scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be if I might enjoy that God,

and be wrapt up to him in heaven and be as it were swallowed up in him for ever. I kept saying, and as it were singing over these words of Scripture to myself; and went to pray to God that I might enjoy him, and prayed in a manner quite different from what I used to do; with a new sort of affection. But it never came into my head that there was anything spiritual, or of a saving nature in this. From about that time I began to have a new kind of apprehension and ideas about Christ and the work of redemption, and the glorious way of salvation by him. An inward sweet sense of these things, at times came into my heart; and my soul was led away in pleasant views and contemplations of them. . . . The sense I had of divine things would often of a sudden kindle up, as it were, a sweet burning in my heart; an ardor of soul that I knew not how to express. Not long after this I gave an account to my father of some things that had passed in my mind. I was pretty much affected by the discourse we had together; and when the discourse was ended, I walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture, for contemplation. And as I was walking there, and looking up into the sky and clouds there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God that I knew not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction; majesty and meekness joined together; it was a sweet and gentle and holy majesty, and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high and great and holy gentleness. After this my sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively. The appearance of everything was altered; there seemed to be

as it were a calm sweet east or appearance of divine glory in almost every thing. God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in every thing; in the sun and moon and stars; in the clouds and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, and trees; in the water, and all nature: which used greatly to fix my mind. I had vehement longings of soul after God and Christ; and after more holiness wherewith my heart seemed to be full and ready to break, which often brought to my mind the words of the Psalmist—Ps. cxix. 20, 'My soul breaketh for the longing it hath.' I often felt a mourning and lamenting in my heart that I had not turned to God sooner, that I might have had more time to grow in grace. The soul of a true Christian, as I then wrote my meditations, appeared such a little white flower as we see in the spring of the year; low and humble as the ground, opening its bosom to receive the pleasant beams of the sun's glory; rejoicing as it were in a calm rapture; diffusing around a sweet fragrance; standing peacefully and lovingly in the midst of other flowers round about; all in like manner opening their bosoms to drink in the light of the sun. There was no part of creature holiness that I had so great a sense of its loveliness as humility, brokenness of heart and poverty of spirit; and there was nothing that I so earnestly longed for. My heart panted after this, to lie low before God in the dust; that I might be nothing, and that God might be *all*, that I might become as a little child."

We have referred to this experience of Edwards' as the very best comment we can think of, on the prayer of the Apostle, and what it is, that he asks from God when he says, 'that the

God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him—the eyes of your understanding being opened.'

May God grant such experience to us! May each of us seek for this knowledge as the source and light of true spiritual life! May we more and more grow in it, if already begun; and if not begun in any of us, may God shine into our hearts to give it!

2nd. Let us now proceed to the second distinct petition in the Apostle's prayer for the Church of Ephesus, 'that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints.'

It is one thing to be a true Christian, and another to realize the great blessedness of being so, and to rejoice, if not in present outward circumstances, which may be sad and grievous, at least, in that glorious future which is in store, and in the precious hope which points to it.

Being effectually called by God they had been 'begotten to a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,' In the exercise of that hope they might be sustained amidst trials as by inward strength from on high, and might renew their journey with ever fresh alacrity. How important then that they should know the value of such heaven-begotten hope! How desirable that they should be led to cherish it as eagerly and constantly as possible!

A false hope may indeed be of all things most ruinous—and the sooner it is shaken and sent to the winds the better. But the genuine hope of the Christian, coming from the gracious

calling of God, it is surely useful, as well as cheering to know. Is it inconsistent with true humility and a lowly sense of one's self? Is not humbleness of spirit a sure accompaniment of that hope? Has it not a purifying effect? Will it not lead the heart to glory only in God, giving Him all the praise?

Doubtless there are still many in the Church who possess the same hope as animated the early Christians, and who do not know the precious treasure they carry in their own breasts, in all its value, as a means of comfort and a motive to exertion as well as an incentive to praise. Observe then that it needs the Spirit of God to teach even a true Christian what is the hope of his calling—in other words, to give him a full assurance that he actually possesses such hope and is not merely free to exercise it, but called on to do so. Over and above all evidence of the graciousness and truth of his hope he depends on God for that firm persuasion which will enable him to say, 'I know in whom I have believed.' 'I hope in God and shall yet hope more and more;' for it is the Spirit that witnesses effectively, although He indeed witnesses with our spirits—giving clearness and Scriptural authority to every argument, and building up the conclusion with impregnable strength.

From hope within, the Apostle rises up to the object of hope without, in that glorious eternity which is reserved for the believer—praying that they may know also 'what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the Saints.' Here you cannot fail to notice the strength and beauty of the Apostle's language—how it struggles to express the ideas which filled and entranced his own soul. Heaven is the consummation of the

Christian's hope—the realization of all that is good, and true, and beautiful, and really pleasurable. The inheritance enjoyed by the Saints among themselves, hereafter, will be ‘riches of glory.’ No words can rise higher or convey more exalted notions. But they are unmeaning sounds unless to the enlightened mind. The descriptions of glory given in Scripture are suggestive of no thoughts of beauty or loveliness or true excellence to the carnal mind, whose only pleasure consists in gross outward elements, of a kind fitted only to minister to ‘the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life.’ Let the terrors of hell be realized! Let conscience be aroused, let the law of God speak, let the misery of damnation be felt, let that terrible abandonment of a horror stricken soul, when it knows its doom and realizes an eternal exclusion from God, be brought about in some of its power! Let anticipation of death eternal be present in the mind! Then by way of contrast, will such words as these possess a new but it may be still a most distracting and even repulsive significance, as the convicted heart turns upwards to a supreme blessedness hitherto despised and lost, and it may be for ever cut off.

Is there no meaning in the Apostle's words? Ask not the self satisfied formalist! Ask not the trifling pleasure-hunter! Ask not the avaricious worldling! Ask not any one whose heart is wedded to his lusts! These all see no meaning and feel no power in such language as truly describes the state of heaven! To them it is words and nothing but words, empty sounds conveying to the soul no idea and no influence at all.

But ask either the hopeless castaway, whose very despair feeds itself on the vision of lost and unattainable glory, the gleams of which tend as much, however distorted and mixed in his impure imagination and defiled conscience, to intensify his misery as any direct sufferings which he has to endure ; or, turning with fear from such a dismal fate, to the clearer and brighter region of Christian hope, ask the humble but enlightened believer, whose actual knowledge of Divine things enables him to see light, in God's light, and who is ravished with the prospect of solid and enduring realities in heaven ! Such an one counts the world a show, and its possessions but the small dust of the balance, and in the kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost—in the enjoyment of charity the best of the graces, with all its goodly train of beneficent and godlike services—in the company of all the worthies of all ages—and above all in the favour of God—and the presence of Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, he sees an inheritance worthy of the soul of man, possessing a 'riches of glory' that truly does weigh in the scales, and must for ever weigh far above all calculation. With these or such like views there is a meaning and power in the language of Scripture—an always increasing significance—most desirable to be known and felt—and for which it is fit and proper to pray and labour, with the most untiring constancy.

3rd. But we must now proceed to offer a few remarks on the *third* topic in the prayer of the Apostle—which is introduced in the 19th and 20th verses—' And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe according to the

working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.'

The meaning of this prayer may be set forth in a few distinct propositions, on which however we cannot enlarge in the present discourse. 1. The Apostle joining himself with the Church contemplates a company of persons distinguished from the world of the ungodly, by the possession of faith, and the enjoyment of spiritual blessings. 2. These persons though actually believers and living in the exercise of faith, may be ignorant of the great change necessary to their being believers—or in other words may not know how mighty an energy was put forth to make them believers. 3. The power which made them believers and sustains their faith is the power of God, and is (4.) analogous or similar to the power put forth in raising Christ from the dead and exalting Him to God's own right hand.

These are important topics and must be reserved for our next discourse. We may however just open up the subject so far as to apprehend the nature of the question involved in the passage before us, and in doing so suggest one or two practical inquiries from what has already been advanced. There can be no doubt that this part of the Apostle's prayer relates to the greatness of the work of our salvation, and is calculated to shew us the necessity of Divine illumination in order to our having just and adequate views on the subject. He prays that God may teach 'what is the greatness of his power to usward who believe.' Here, you observe, that 'faith' is represented as an effect or result, or that a certain effect or result is connected

with faith and implied in it, demanding as an adequate cause nothing short of the mighty power of God. It is no common or ordinary power of God. But there is a greatness of power here—a mighty power—similar to that which raised up Christ from the dead.

Now if we would inquire into this matter, in a satisfactory way, we must just do as we would do in any other case in which we are seeking to find out and estimate the cause of a given effect or result,—with this difference, that here, we must be guided and controlled in our views by the authority of Scripture, our only rule in Spiritual subjects. We must look at the effect or result; we must weigh all that is contained in it; we must do so in the balance of the Sanctuary. This accomplished, we must inquire for an adequate and sufficient cause, and in this also follow the leadings or instruction of Scripture. Faith, then, as an effect or result in believers—or as connected with an effect or result, and simply yet quite fully expressive of that effect or result—is, in the first place, to be looked at and weighed. ‘What is faith’? What is included in it as a saving grace? The answer to this question might be given in few words or in many. You may take the definition of the Shorter Catechism. You may take the description of Paul, with his exemplifications of it, in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. You may search the whole of Scripture, with whatever aids you possess. But you are bound to have some definite idea or conception of its nature, before the mind, when you ask the question, next, by what cause or power is faith produced? Is it within the power of man to originate

it in his own soul? Is it within the range of those natural operations of God's Providence, by which we are said to live and move, and have our being in him? Or is it beyond man's power—acting as a natural man? And does it imply a special—supernatural—great and mighty power, of God—that can be compared to nothing short of that Power which raised the Saviour from the grave? This is the question, to which we believe this passage of Holy Scripture relates; and, if it does, which, we think, it conclusively settles.

This topic suggests an all-important subject of practical religion. We refer to the need of an humble and reverent spirit, and one in harmony with the feelings which led Paul to cease not in his prayers for the Ephesians, that they might receive the spirit of Wisdom and Revelation. Let us, then, adopt that prayer as ours, both for ourselves and others. Let us constantly seek that wisdom which cometh from above. Let us become fools that we may be made wise.—AMEN.

LECTURE XII.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—19-20.

“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

“Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,” &c.

In our former lecture we had just arrived at these verses containing, as we stated, the third and last topic in Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians.

The subject here introduced—the power of God towards believers—is so important that it well deserves a distinct and separate illustration, even in a course of lectures. And it is so vast a theme that many discourses instead of one would be necessary to illustrate it in anything like a satisfactory manner. Many of the illustrations which might be fully discussed in connection with the subject, will occur afterwards in the Epistle; and therefore we shall content ourselves if in the present discourse we do little more than indicate and sug-

gest some of these, leaving them to be taken up at greater length when they fall under our more special consideration.

The subject brought before us in this part of the Apostle's prayer is, we have said, 'the power of God towards believers.' He prays that the Ephesians may be enlightened of God to know 'what that power is,' according to its actual greatness and excellency, which he sets forth in terms of the utmost weight and significance. We may observe then, at the outset, that this is a subject which is not obvious to people generally, and which the unaided intellect cannot understand or appreciate. Hence, no doubt, the opposition, contradiction, and perversion, to which the truth of God on this matter has been exposed.

The magnificent display of the infinite power of God in nature is or may be seen by men naturally. 'The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which he hath made, even his eternal power and godhead.' Looking around us and above, we behold on all hands the manifestation of the Divine wisdom and power. In the great and the small—in the heavenly host and in the creatures which dwell on earth, with their wonderful powers—everywhere—the omnipotence of God appears. 'By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens, his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.' But in the field of grace, where mind or spirit chiefly are considered, we have a display of Divine power not less in reality but infinitely greater and more admirable, if only we are enabled to realize it, than in the field of nature. "It was great," says the poet, "to raise

a world from nought, but greater to redeem." And the greatness of the work of redemption, all clusters in and around the results to which the Apostle here points—the results accomplished in believers. The power of God put forth in believers—making and maintaining them believers—is so great and admirable that the strongest terms which the language of man can supply, are sought for in order to set it forth, in a befitting manner. Here we are brought into contact with 'the deep things of God,' and therefore, need the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, that we may 'know the truth,' and above all, that we may embrace it and cherish it to our own spiritual advancement.

On glancing at these two verses, as expressing part of the Apostle's prayer for the Ephesians, we see that he contemplates believers *as such*, i. e., as distinguished from others, and as exercising their faith—and that he finds in their case results or effects which are due to the power of God. We see him, further, using language to describe that power which is fitted to give us the loftiest conceptions of its greatness and excellence. He prays that they may be enlightened to know 'what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.'

We may, then, be enabled to enter somewhat into the mind of the Apostle—we may enter profitably into this chief and inner department of Divine truth, and come to know the mind of the Spirit by whom he was taught—if we put ourselves, as

much as possible, in the Apostle's position, and ask, *First*—What are some of those results in the case of believers living in the exercise of their faith, which are brought about by the power of God; and, *Secondly*—What sort of language this is, and what is implied in it, by which he describes that power of God, which is to be seen in these results.

I. First, then, *What are some of those results in believers, as believers, which display the power of God?*

Here the question is not,—What special efforts of Divine power have been put forth in the actions and lives of certain individual believers; or, what peculiar manifestations of the Divine presence and power have appeared in particular and trying periods of the church's history? but, What are the invariable results in all believers which render them distinct from others—from the world—and indicate some power more than human? It is plain that the Apostle eyes believers *as believers*—having some things common among themselves, by which they may be classed together and separated from the world. There was nothing extraordinary in the case of the Ephesian church more than any other church; and although there was much that was uncommon in the Apostle's own case, there was no reference in his mind to anything peculiar to himself, or anything but what he could identify with the experience of the Ephesians—for he includes them with himself when he says 'What is the exceeding greatness of his power to *us-ward* who believe'—nay, he certainly includes all believers in all ages. It is something, therefore, common to all believers of which he here speaks. The reference in the Apos-

tle's prayer is not to some such uncommon, extraordinary, and miraculous power as was put forth, for example, in the case of Enoch when he was translated to heaven without tasting of death, or of Moses when he wrought the prodigies in Egypt, and smote the red sea in two, and cleft the rock, or of Samson in the feats of his unparalleled strength, or of the three in the burning fiery furnace, or of Daniel in the lion's den, or of Paul himself when he was smitten to the earth and remained blind for three days, or when he was afterwards lifted to the third heavens; but it is to the essential and invariable results in believers as such—to be found in every case—the most obscure as well as the most prominent—the humblest as well as the most important and illustrious. It applies to every true Christian, to believers now, as well as the Ephesians.

The question therefore is, What are those effects or results of Divine power which are common to all believers, and which distinguish them from all others, and on which the Apostle had his eye when he says, 'What is the greatness of his power to us-ward who believe?'

Here, *in the first place*, we are taught by Scripture that all believers have been regenerated or converted; and, no doubt, Paul had this in view. After finishing his reference to his prayer for the Ephesians, as he does in this chapter, he says concerning them in the beginning of the next, 'And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.' What can be more evident, then, than that the Apostle had this great fact before his mind, of their having being quickened by God; in other words, made spiritually alive, or converted, or

regenerated, (for all these terms relate to one and the same thing) when he desires them to know the power of God which had been exerted upon them. The same work is again and again spoken of in the Epistle as having been wrought in them and in all who are believers. Thus, (ii. 4.) ‘But God who is rich in merey, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.’ (v. 10.) ‘For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works.’ And the same work is always spoken of in Scripture as having been performed in believers, and that before they either did or could believe. ‘If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.’*—where we are not to understand that a man’s being in Christ Jesus is prior to—or the cause of—his being a new creature, but that his being in Christ Jesus is a proof or evidence of his having already been made a new creature. This is abundantly plain from the words of John, ch. i. 12-13, ‘As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.’

These passages are enough for our present purpose, which is simply to point out and exhibit those results which have been accomplished in all true believers and are to be ascribed to God. It is plain enough, from these few, that Conversion or Regeneration is a work which has been effected in all true be-

* 2 Cor. v. 17.

lievers. But it may be needful that we should say something of the nature of this work, in order to realize in some measure its greatness. This we shall do in a very general way—without attempting anything like a full discussion of the subject. There are two things in which regeneration *principally* consists, viz: a heart to love God, and a spirit to submit to his will. We have expressed these essential and main parts of regeneration, in language which cannot be made plainer. It is in accordance with the language of David's prayer—'Create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit.' If we consider what is implied in these things, we see in them results of the greatest magnitude and importance. We see in them what pertains to all true Christians. *An heart to love God!* Can this be ascribed to any but believers in Christ? Are not men generally 'lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God?' Are not all naturally disposed to be lovers of self and of this present world—to make some creature their chief good, in and around which their affections move, and for which 'they spend and are spent?' An heart to love God is a clean heart, and as such it is a 'new heart,' for no one has it by nature. It chooses God, as revealed in Christ, as the chief good; it delights in Him; and all its affections tend to move around and towards Him, as the planets do with the sun. *A spirit to submit to God's will!* i. e., to obey his commands and acquiesce in his appointments. Is this a natural thing in man? Is not every one's own will his law? Does he naturally obey God, except where in apparently doing so he is really obeying himself? The wrongness of man's spirit is never more plain

than in this, that he is often found doing the right thing from a wrong motive—serving himself, only, when he seems to himself, perhaps, and to others, to be serving God. A spirit to submit to God and obey him truly is a right spirit, and as such, it is a new spirit in man. It has no place in the natural man who is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. In the spiritual man it has become a law of the mind—a new tendency, to take God's will—to bow to his authority—to live in his service.

Without entering further into this subject, enough, we trust, has been said to bring forward a constant result found in believers, and to shew, however imperfectly, that it must be a result of the greatest consideration.

We may now, *in the second place*, direct your attention to the faith itself which believers exercise and manifest, as a result equally due to the power of God.

That the Apostle had this also in view must be evident, from the special and speedy reference which he makes to it in the second chapter, in the light of a result, or effect of the Divine Agency. 'For by grace, says he, are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus,'* &c.,

The essential nature of faith is *trust* exercised towards God in Christ, as held forth in the Gospel, with personal appropriation, and self devotion. This it is which constitutes any individual a believer. Is it a natural or common endowment? Are

* Ch. ii. 8.

people born with faith in their nature? Is it so easy and simple a thing that its presence may be looked for everywhere, at least in all who have given any attention to the things of God? Or does it imply a new, extra-natural and uncommon state of mind and heart—so as to become an effect or result quite peculiar and characteristic—a distinctive evidence and mark of those who are saved by God?

Now in answer to these questions, it may be admitted that man was made for faith in a general sense, i. e., to trust God, and feel his dependance on God, and give himself to God, and take God for his own all-sufficient portion. Man is born for faith 'as the sparks fly upward'—as the ivy twines around the oak—as the child leans on its mother's breast. In this sense it may be said, and the remark is of the utmost importance, that there is a natural capacity for the exercise of faith in all of us; that our original constitution and relation to God make it a most natural and fitting thing that we should trust God; that this is the true and only possible link of connection between us and God; and that the gospel, by recalling us to the exercise of it, shews itself to be most adapted and suitable to our nature, and the actual constitution of things. But man—naturally a trusting being, because necessarily a dependant being—casts his faith around every where or centres it in self, instead of throwing it upward to God. He moors himself on a thousand sandy shoals, instead of on the Rock of Ages; and the question is, how is he brought off from these shifting, treacherous anchorages, and firmly stayed by the one sure and certain confidence? The Gospel achieves this mighty result

—opening the eyes to see the true light, reclaiming the wayward into the right course, bringing the sinner back to his God. ‘I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ,’ says Paul, ‘for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.’ *

It might be admitted, also, that faith or trust in a general sense is common in the world, as well as natural. If natural for man to be a trusting being, we may look for it that this trust or faith will be manifested in common life. What then is a more general element in domestic, social, and international life? Why its presence is universal! The wife trusts the husband; the children trust their parents, and each other; friends trust friends; merchants, merchants; nations, nations. The husbandman relies on the genial seasons; the mariner confides in his bark and the favouring breeze; the speculator and the politician calculate by the vicissitudes of trade, and the waves of public interests. If there is distrust in the world, in this general sense, it appears as the exception—as the mere corrective of the excesses or misapplications of one of the most necessary and universal elements in human existence. Consider how each of us for one act of distrust, exhibits daily a hundred of trust; and it is so with all; so that throughout the entire social system *trust* is the mainspring of all activity, and the sustainer of all progress—and the anchor of all hope.

But look to the interests of the soul, affecting the true life of man, bound up as they are with the Gospel and the cross of Christ, and held forth to all hearers of God’s word, as secured

* Rom. i. 16.

by Christ, and made good to all who trust in him ! We might indeed expect that trust here would be at once forthcoming in all—that it would be as common at least within the circle of the Church, as trust in general, is common within the circle of the world. We might indeed expect this, did we not take into account certain sad features in man's corrupt nature. Blind to spiritual things—in ignorance of his sinfulness and misery—engrossed with the interests of the body—of time—he allows the active principles of his nature to be drawn away from Christ ; or, deluded by a false Gospel, he trusts a false Christ—making a saviour of his own religion—of his repentance, of his good deeds, or even of his fancied faith, proved to be only a fancied faith by his trusting to it ; or, deterred by unbelieving doubts and a false humility, waiting a time when he shall become more worthy, he casts his trust on a future self ; or, once more, learning to hate the trammels of true religion, yet seeking its aid that he may make gain of godliness, he puts on the garments of piety and turns herself out of doors and becomes a whited sepulchre full of corruption and rottenness. Here, then, the reverse holds good from what we found in the world. Faith in Christ is not so common as disbelief. In ordinary affairs trust, in a general sense, is the rule, distrust the exception. In the affairs of the soul few, comparatively speaking, have a real trust in the only Saviour. But the rarity of a thing enhances its value, and the value of a thing depends on the strength expended in its production, or the difficulty of its procurement. When, therefore, you consider faith as the actual possession of some in the church

(their absolute number, known to God, may be a large one; compared with the world, and as known to us it may be small) when you weigh this rare endowment in the balance of the sanctuary, it gives you a result of nothing less than Divine strength—an uncommon effect, at least, demanding your farther inquiry as to its true cause and source, whatever that may be found to be.

We are at present adducing some effects or results in believers, which it is conceived that the Apostle must have had before his mind when he speaks of the greatness of the power of God to us-ward who believe. We have already mentioned regeneration and faith or trust. It is unnecessary that we should do more than speak of these things in a general way, in this place, of course exhibiting them, as we have attempted to do, in their true nature and character. In the same way we shall speak of a third result or effect (and we shall not add more) which is peculiar to all true believers. It is a fact then, *in the third place*, that believers in Christ are enabled successfully to serve God in the world, and are preserved in a state of grace to the end.

The two former elements of the Christian character, regeneration and faith, are necessary in order to serve God aright. Read the first chapter of Isaiah from the 1st to the 20th verse, and you will see how impossible it is to serve God without *regeneration*, for that may be taken as the scope, at least, of that illustrious passage; and Paul tells us that ‘without faith it is impossible to please God.’ But grant the presence of these two elements, then, of necessity the service of God will

follow, as the stream flows from the newly opened fountain, or the newly smitten rock, or as the tree grows 'near planted by the river.' As, however, in this rugged earth with its sandy deserts, its rocky headlands, and its destroying winds, the stream is often thwarted in its course, or dried up in its channel, and the healthiest tree is often stunted in its growth and gnarled up into the merest dwarf, so the regenerate believer, notwithstanding the goodliness of the spring or root that is within him, has much to contend against in the service of God. Do we not find Christians, who are, in point of fact, very much like mountain streams, that are veered from side to side, and some times move for a space in a direction the very opposite of their main course; or like those rivers in the east, of which we read, that disappear beneath the succulent sands and for a distance are lost altogether to the eye of the traveller; or, again, to vary the figure, like trees that shew a weather side by the bend they take in the opposite direction, and their one-sided fruitfulness. Nay, do not all Christians shew too plainly that they have but a very imperfect course in many respects, and that the difficulties within and without are too many and too great for them. Nevertheless they *are* trees of righteousness—they are streams of truth in this false and evil world. They increase, they grow, they yield blessed results of service to God and man. They are successful more and more to the end. They overcome the evil that is in them, they baffle the evil that is without. 'A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit.' What works hath not faith wrought? The success of a true Christian is a great fact, and this fact is

in itself very remarkable. It is one, however, which belongs to the region of faith, not to the region of the outward and the merely visible. A Christian is often successful, in spite of himself; i. e., his old self with all its motives of worldly wisdom and prudence and propriety. These may fail—the work or result he aimed at may not be accomplished—but another is, which he had little thought of, and one in which he will afterwards glory. A Christian is often successful when the world thinks he is defeated; as Christ was most of all successful in his death. Thus poverty, affliction, suffering, sorrow, distress, which to the eye look so pitiable, may be conditions the most blessed and productive of good, when seen by faith. What Paul says of himself is true in some degree or other in every case. ‘Approving ourselves as the servants of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, . . . by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true; as unknown and yet well known; as dying and behold we live; as chastened and not killed; as sorrowful yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.’*

“Those that within the house of God
Are planted by his grace,
They shall grow up and flourish all
In our God’s holy place.
And in old age, when others fail,
They fruit still forth shall bring;
They shall be fat and full of sap,
And aye be flourishing.
To shew that upright is the Lord,
He is a rock to me,
And He from all unrighteousness
Is altogether free.”

* 2 Cor. vi. 4-10.

We have thus exhibited some of the distinctive effects to be seen in all believers in Christ—regeneration—faith—the successful service of God. These are invariable results indicating an uncommon, yea divine cause—as they are not in themselves either natural or common. The Apostle ascribes great things to the power of God, as he finds this power put forth towards believers, and having those effects in view, as doubtless he had, describes the kind of power they imply in language which demands our special consideration.

II. *Secondly.* Let us now weigh the language used here by the Apostle to describe the power of God towards believers. Consider the force of the Apostle's language by which he sets forth the effects which he perceives accomplished in believers—their regeneration—their faith—their successful perseverance in the service of God, all which he, doubtless, yea certainly, had in view—and give to this language its due significance.

It is, first, 'the power of God' by which these effects are brought about—'the power of God to us-ward.' Not human power—not angelic power, but God's power. It is secondly, 'a greatness of power'—not an insignificant or inferior exercise of power, but 'great'—fitted to call forth our wonder, and make us feel our littleness. It is not only 'greatness of power'—but 'exceeding greatness!' 'What is the exceeding greatness of his power?' It is a power far surpassing the common or ordinary displays of Divine power whether in creation or providence; whether affecting mind or matter. Degrees of Divine power are according to our capacity of apprehension—for all things are alike easy to God. But in this the Apostle

apprehends a very high degree of power, such as he beholds no where else. He can only liken it to the power exhibited in the resurrection of Christ from the dead—of which his conceptions are couched in the strongest possible terms—‘According to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when he raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places.’

This is the only fitting comparison the Apostle introduces. The power displayed in believers in their conversion, in their faith, in their successful service, is up to (κατα)—quite equal to—that high energy of God’s powerful strength—by which he raised up Christ from the dead and set Him at His own right hand.

The resurrection of our Lord is the crowning miracle and fact of Christianity, and yet, strange to say, we have no particular statement of it, in the narrative of the Gospels. We find Him in the tomb, which was carefully sealed and guarded; we, next, find that tomb empty, and subsequent appearances of its occupant in living form are recorded; but the resurrection itself is wrapt in silence and mystery. This is the only passage immediately relating to it—Matt. xxviii. 2-4,—‘And behold there was a great earthquake; for the Angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightening and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake and tremble as dead men.’ All God’s great works are performed, as it were, in mystery; and this is an instance. To this we may apply the

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language in Job, 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding,'* or the language of Isaiah, 'Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord or being His counsellor hath taught Him.'† In regard to the greatest works of God, we may know what goes before, and what follows—but the precise manner of His operation it is not fitting, or perhaps possible, for us to perceive and comprehend. We know that Jesus rose from the dead by the power of the Father—by His own Divine power—by the quickening power of the Spirit. And Paul here makes use of this as the standard of that 'exceeding great power of God' which is exerted on believers—by whom they believe to the saving of their souls, by whom they are sustained unto everlasting life. Now, if you reflect on this language of the Apostle's, and weigh its import, there are some things which it excludes, and to which it gives the lie, and there are some things which it implies and confirms beyond all doubt. 1st. What does it exclude? Observe (a) that mere moral suasion is not sufficient to account for the effects produced in believers, and that mere moral suasion will never convert a sinner, nor make him a believer, nor, if he is a believer, sustain him in the true service of God. It is no doubt indeed true that the Word of God is full of arguments and persuasives addressed to sinners in order to their salvation—that it is the means of our enlightenment, and the only means—that its appeals and entreaties and threatenings are directed to us as intelligent beings and free agents, and that we do not know if conversion ever takes place without the

* Job xxxviii. 4. † Isa. xl. 13.

Word of God brought to bear on the mind in some way or other. All this is true; and something similar may be said of subordinate means and methods such as the preaching of the Word by uninspired men—the events of Providence—the example of others. But even the Word of God, with whatever subsidiary aid it is backed, is, after all, but the voice of God—the message of God—the appeal of God to sinners to turn, to repent, to be converted. And though this voice were echoed anew by Paul or Apollos, it is still only a voice. The power may be a-wanting, and where the power is a-wanting the Gospel itself is but an empty sound. It was not by the earthquake that Christ rose—nor by the angel that rolled away the stone—nor by the light that entered his hollow tomb—but by the inherent strength of God exerted on his lifeless body and separated spirit; so it is not by *any means*, however necessary in some respects, such as may be included in the idea of moral suasion, that lifeless sinners become believers in Christ. To God alone the power belongs. Further observe (*b*) That the language of Paul excludes the notion that the will of man is sufficient for these results. With regard to the first turning of a sinner to God—his first believing in Christ, and indeed every thing of a gracious sort which he manifests, the Scripture explicitly refuses to give man's own will the credit or praise. 'It is not of man that willeth.' 'It is God that worketh in you to will.' A divine strength or energy is necessary to turn man's will. Moral suasion may be used, the word of life is sounded in the ear, the terrors of the law, the merey of the Gospel may be, and actually are, brought to bear; but the

question is, who makes the sinner to comply, to consent, to embrace Jesus Christ as held forth in the Gospel? Over and above all, God's power, God himself, deals with the sinner's will; and he becomes willing, not of himself, but in time of God's power.

(c) And further still, is it not obvious that every other natural cause, that can be thought of, is excluded by the language of Paul? If it is neither moral suasion alone or by itself, nor the will of man exerting some latent power, we must be at a loss to think of any other cause, unless God. Do men become believers by chance, if that can be thought of as any cause at all, although, strange to say, some appear to have a notion of this kind? Do men become changed in their nature by fate, or, if you will, predestination, ascribing thereto, as many seem to imagine, some inherent power—some secret, abstract influence? This were absurd. No. The simple truth is far more acceptable, surely, than any strange and vague and shadowy notions of that kind. Predestination is only God's plan and design, according to which he never acts blindly but after the most wise and holy counsel of his will. What it concerns us to know and deal with, is, that it is God himself, that Spirit infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, by whom we—believers—have been made what we are, and rejoice in hope of the glory to come.

2nd. What things are they which this language of Paul's implies and confirms beyond all doubt?

We reply (*a*) That over and above and beyond all means, agencies, instrumentalities, whatsoever, there is an immediate

and irresistible power of God exerted towards believers in their conversion, and, also, in their subsequent life. This, my friends, is the very pith of the Gospel as a means of man's salvation, that God himself is brought nigh to the sinner—that He takes possession of his mind, will, heart—that He raises up the spiritually dead, and makes them alive by His indwelling Spirit. All the forms of speech that can be thought of are made use of to convey to our minds this idea; without receiving which, indeed, we are still in ignorance of God's way of life and exposed to the most ruinous errors. Is not God said to 'create us?' Eph. ii. 10. Is it not said 'except ye be born of water and of the spirit ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God'? Does not God renew, regenerate, revive, quicken? Is it not said 'of His own will begat He us?' The whole of Scripture, in short, is full of the most expressive language to the effect that God's power is directly put forth in the minds, hearts, wills, of those who are saved. Take one passage as an illustration. Let us select it from among those in which God is said to give us a new heart. Ez. xxxvi. 26, 27, 'A new heart also will I give unto you, and a new Spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes.' In this passage, we may say, 'as many words as many arguments,' to illustrate the truth we are endeavouring to set forth. '*I will give,*' says he, not, I will offer only or prepare; '*a heart*'—not merely an understanding, but the innermost soul itself; '*a new heart*, not, I will dress up the old and change it for the

better, but plainly, a new heart and a different; not by joining my heart with yours but removing altogether the *stony heart*, hard, arid, and void of all sense; and I will give you an heart of *flesh*, flexible, soft, compliant, endued with lively sense; and, above all, I will *place* or *put* my Spirit, not I will make Him to pass through you as a guest, but I will establish Him as Lord and Ruler; not in the outward parts, but *within* you, in the very citadel itself; and lest you should still seem left to act by your own will, or some power conferred on you, I will *cause* you to walk in my statutes; not merely I will exhort you, but I will persuade you; not I will coerce you, as if your own wills were destroyed; but I will cause you to *walk*; I will work in you both to will and to do; I will work that you may work.'

(b) But further it is implied in Paul's language, in our text, that the Power of God towards believers well deserves to be called *supernatural*. It is likened to the power by which Christ was raised from the dead. The terms used exclude the idea of ordinary or natural power. The effects are beyond mere human strength or ordinary causes. The result is, therefore, as great a miracle as any that can be conceived. Every believer is a monument of the exceeding greatness of the power of God according to the working of his mighty power, by which he raised Christ from the dead.

On this topic, however, it is unnecessary to enlarge. Enough! if the view presented tend to enhance the subject, and to exalt our conceptions of the greatness of Divine grace.

We trust that no one will imagine that any of our remarks

in this discourse have any tendency to slight the necessity of the means of grace. We have not affirmed that God's power is exerted in the way of crushing the human faculties, or of excluding those means which he himself has directed us to use. What we have said is—and the passage before us, and, indeed, Scripture throughout, warrants us in saying it—that God exerts a power over and above all agencies and means—a direct immediate power on the soul that is saved—that is converted, believes, and obeys the Gospel. But it may be asked of what use will our pains and labour in plying the means of grace be, if after all it is this direct immediate power of God that decides the matter—that really gives the turn to the heart and the bent to the life, and lands us safe at last in Zion. To this we reply,—You have a notion, then, that God is only to help you—to come to your aid, when you are baffled—in short, to play second part to your own exertions, whilst *you* are to become *really* your own converter, your own preserver, and your own saviour! Ah, friend, you have stated a difficulty, it may be, but you are now landed in a worse. And, now, let me tell you that the great doctrine, which we are, here, taught, is the only one we know of, that makes the use of means either rational or hopeful. ‘Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.’

If it be not God that is working in me when I, like Paul, ‘cease not in my prayers,’ then my prayers are vain oblations, and an abomination to God; for it is by the Spirit alone that I can truly pray. But when I set myself to the Lord with

prayer, and supplication, and confession, in all earnestness and sincerity, looking to the great High Priest, I have some faint assurance, to say the least, that I have the Spirit, and that I ‘pray in the Spirit, and with the understanding also;’ and I pray that God would, not assist me only, but powerfully save me by His grace and strength, working in me that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.

When I am thus engaged, who knows but God has been already working? And, in diligent study of God’s Word, and more and more steadfast resistance of temptation, who shall say that God’s power is not the main cause and moving energy? And when I put my hand to the plough, not looking back, that I may work whilst it is called to-day for the great husbandman—when I live in his service, who shall hinder me from saying, ‘yet not I, but Christ liveth in me?’

At all events, if that does not animate you—if the glorious revelation of God’s power exerted in sinners, and by them, does not inspire you to diligence and steadfastness, that you may always abound in the work of the Lord, then God forbid that you should fall back on the miserable motives of the hireling, or the vain hopes of the self-righteous, or the haughty and self-sufficient maxim of worldliness ‘that God helps them that help themselves;’ for these are all fatal quicksands on which you can never moor your helpless bark!—AMEN.

LECTURE XIII.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—20-22.

His mighty power; "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion," &c.

In these verses, the Apostle sets forth the greatness of the resurrection of Christ as a work of God, together with its great and glorious consequences, in order that he may convey an adequate idea of the power of God towards believers. This passage, then, is subordinate to the idea introduced in the 19th verse—'the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe'; but, according to the manner of this Apostle, when he touches on the grace of God, or the person and glory of Christ, the subject seems to carry him away, and he breaks forth into rapturous language which in strength and sublimity cannot be exceeded. The subject, here, is indeed far above any language of man, and it is, from the nature of it, impossible,

that there can be any exaggeration or extravagance, even in the superlative terms which are used by the Apostle. We have before us, in these verses, the crowning fact or facts pertaining to the mediatorial work of the Redeemer; and the language is nothing more than a description of these facts. Its sublimity is the consequence of its being a simple and plain statement of sublime and glorious realities, relating to the magnificent power of God, in raising and exalting Christ, and assigning to Him the Empire of the Universe. And, be it remembered, all that is here said concerning this magnificent power is brought in to enhance our notions of that power which is exerted in believers, in their being raised from spiritual death and exalted at last to eternal glory. The power is the same in both cases. It is the exceeding greatness of God's mighty power. On this we depend for our salvation. It is no ordinary or common power that will suffice; and it is well if this truth brings us to the right source of all grace and glory, and makes us, whilst using appointed means, 'to pray always with all prayer and supplication,' that the power of God may be manifested in our behalf.

With these few introductory remarks, let us, now, direct attention to the passage forming the subject of this lecture. It may be appropriately divided into three parts. We have here—

I. The Resurrection of Christ.

II. The Dignity of his exaltation.

III. His universal Supremacy.

I. *The Resurrection of Christ* is here brought before us in

these words : ‘ according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.’

The topic thus introduced, is the power of God in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The simple fact itself, if only realized, is sufficient to evidence a power more than created. Upon this fact the whole truth of Christianity may be and is actually staked, so that, as Paul says elsewhere, ‘ If Christ be not raised then is your faith vain.’ To create out of nothing the ‘ fearful and wonderful’ frame of man’s corporeal structure—to endue it with sense and life, and to unite with it an immaterial, intelligent soul—is the work of an Almighty Creator. The chief miracle in creation is the production of life; and the highest form of life is the intelligent and voluntary spirit, such as is the soul of man. Death consists in the destruction and cessation of life, or in the complete separation of the soul from the body. To restore dead man to life must be acknowledged as a miracle scarcely inferior to creating him out of nothing at first. We feel that it is the province of Omnipotence to give life or to restore it—to constitute man of body and soul, a living personal agent, or to re-organize and renew him after the destruction and dissolution of death have really taken place. We see, then, the hand of God exerting itself, divinely, (i. e., wielding an incommunicable prerogative of power, even the power of creating or giving life) in the resurrection of Christ from the dead. And accordingly it is ascribed invariably to God—either to the Father (Rom. vi. 4); or to the Son himself, as God, (John ii. 19); or to the Holy Ghost. (1 Pet. iii. 18.)

But is there nothing more to be seen in the resurrection of our Lord than a mere exercise of Omnipotent power? If so, the Power, here displayed, would be nothing different from, or more wonderful than, the common productions of nature, or the special interpositions of Providence, in the yearly re-vegetation of the earth, or the raising of the widow's son, or of Lazarus, from the dead. Is it a mere miracle and nothing more?—a violation of the ordinary and established laws of nature, by a sovereign exercise of the Divine Prerogative? That it is a miracle in the proper and common acceptation of the term none can deny. But it is no common miracle. There are elements connected with it of a moral and spiritual kind, which render it peculiar. In connection with the purposes and plans of God, in the saving of sinners, it is the miracle of miracles; it is the key to all others—it is the ground and cause of all others; it explains the whole course of God's interpositions with mankind from first to last. In the raising of Christ from the dead, and subsequent exaltation, you have the greatest display of Divine power that can be made. Look at the matter in its true light. What is death, as the doom of mankind? Is it a mere physical evil, coming in the course of nature, as it comes on the inferior creation? By no means. It is the evidence and proof to us, according to the Scriptures, of a deeper evil. It is the outward sign of a more direful death than that of the physical organization. It is but part of an entire penalty, and that penalty the wages of sin. God himself had imposed and inflicted this penalty. And, according to the Scriptures, the power of executing this penalty had

been entrusted to the chief of those evil angels who had revolted from God and fell; so that Satan has the power of death, and his power and authority depend on the sentence and law of God. The Being who thus wields the power of death is conceived by us to be possessed of prodigious powers; the mightiest of principalities. He is the personal embodiment, no doubt, of all the strength that evil anywhere can exert. No doubt he is only suffered by God, who could destroy him by the breath of his nostrils. But since evil exists and is suffered by God, however mysteriously, nothing hinders that a Being of surpassing capabilities should personally wield all the power of evil, and all the energy of its destructive virus under the supreme government of God. And this is actually the case. There is a Prince of this world—the prince of the power of the air—he that has the power of death that is the Devil. We cannot comprehend the immense power and energy of evil which he is permitted to wield. We have seen, however, among the frail children of men, how one man of superior intelligence, and courage, becoming imbued with the aspiring ambition of a vain-glorious nation, could, for many a year, carry havoc and devastation along with him, in his insatiable course and keep the world awake with fear, till in the end he was chained to his narrow rock; and if you conceive of a Being endowed with angelic powers of intellect and courage becoming the personal embodiment and representative and head and king of all that is evil in the universe,—such is the true conception of him who, under God's most just and holy government, exercises the power of death, and holds fast those

who have, by a just sentence of Divine law, been handed over to his dark and dismal jurisdiction. Does God then approve of evil? Is He in love with the misery of sinners? Are death and destruction dear to Him? Oh no! Let the mystery be ever so great which darkens the subject of the power of evil, and of Satan, its authorized ruler, nothing can be more certain than that God has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. The evidence of this lies in His sending His Son in the room of sinners—to bear their sins in His own body on the tree, and to reinstate them in the favour of God and eternal life. Christ, the Son, submits to the Divine plan. He is born of a woman, made under the law. He endures the temptations of Satan unaffected and unscathed. He comes under the bann of God for sin laid upon him. He is forsaken of God. As man he endures the curse, unmoved to evil in his soul, and without one stray thought or feeling that was in the least sinful or wrong. The enemy exerts all his power, brings upon him the wrath of man, accuses him of all the guilt he sacrificially bore, shuts out from him the light of his Father's countenance, and at length separates his soul from his body, and leaves him as if totally vanquished. But his dismay and perplexity must have been great when the truth was at last discovered. The destroyer had separated his soul from his body, so that he died; but, for once, it was a soul, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, and a body pure as the driven snow. God had forsaken His human soul, that bore, for the time, the sins and sorrows of mankind; but God was really with Him still, yea one with Him, in close and indissoluble union.

Satan pours accusations upon Him; but He had voluntarily taken His people's crimes upon Him, and He can drink the cup to its dregs. Man's wrath can only accelerate what higher powers and principles than man's already make certain. By suffering and dying, then, He out-wits the foe, and steals victory from him by apparent defeat. It was no clumsy, outward, physical contest. It was no worldly triumph. Here the elements are all moral and spiritual on the side of Christ. By holy, righteous, perfect obedience and suffering, He overcame all the power of the enemy, destroying death and him that hath its power, i. e., the Devil. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is the moral and spiritual power of Divine Righteousness over all the power that had been entrusted to or wielded by Satan. It is the power of Divine love triumphing over the effects of Satanic power sustained by Divine law. Justice being satisfied in Christ, the power needed was to wrench from the executioner of the law the keys of his office, which he kept with all the vengeful satisfaction and delight of his nature. A victim had fallen into his hands worth keeping. He thought he had come by him in the ordinary course of his privilege. Death was holding him fast, as it had done millions of others. He watched over his tomb with savage joy. As yet it was not perhaps apparent to Satan that anything was wrong. Perhaps the thought never crossed his mind. But, Thou hast a prisoner, now, O! destroyer, that will baffle all thy skill and cunning; before whom thy bars and gates of whatever brass will become as smoke before the wind! Knowest thou not that the patent of thy power—the charter of thy

privilege—is now taken away, being nailed to the cross where this one died so ignominiously and weakly in thy presence! Thou hast the power of death! But why? Because sin entered into the world; by thee, thou tempter! But now sin has been atoned for, by this victim, who, though man, is also God! And, so, Thou and Sin and Death are all destroyed! This man is thy death, O Death! This man, on account of thee, O Sin, was made sin, that Righteousness might come in thy stead! This man, O Destroyer, is thy destruction! Hark the voice of holy angels! He is not here, in the loathsome tomb! He is risen, as He said, and soon He will ascend gloriously to heaven!

The resurrection of Christ, we have said, is not only the greatest of all miracles, but it is the cause and explanation of all God's interpositions for mankind from first to last. A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature. But the laws of nature are only the established order of God's Providence. The resurrection of Christ violates the law of mortality and decay. This is God's established order for man, because of the entrance of sin into the world. In Christ sin is virtually destroyed; in Him also death is virtually destroyed. God is just in pardoning sin; He is also just in preventing at any time its consequences. Therefore all miracles of mercy are due to the resurrection of Christ or follow from it, whether wrought before or after His great work of atonement.

And unless Christ had died and risen again, what could God have been to this world, except an avenging Judge? To the resurrection is due the very preservation of the world. But

especially, does the resurrection of Christ become the cause of the regeneration of each sinner that is saved. He was raised for our justification. He was raised that the Spirit might descend and renew us in spiritual life. And it is the same Divine Power that raises us from sin to holiness, that raised up Christ from the dead. 'The enemy,' in each individual case has possession of the house. The usurper occupies the throne. But his authority being destroyed, his actual power remains only to be crushed. This is the work of God's Spirit, in the hearts of sinners, and for this we pray, if our prayers have any meaning. For this we hope, if we have any true and lively hope. By the Spirit we are delivered from the power of evil, and not by mere moral motives, or the force of our own will. 'If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.'

II. But we now pass on to the second topic in the passage before us, viz: The exaltation of Christ and its dignity—'and set Him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power,'—&c.

Here we have a further display of the Divine power, towards Christ, in His exaltation. This is the consequence of the former, and is the climax of that excellent strength which has been put forth for man's salvation. Observe here—

1. The right hand is the position of highest honour and power and privilege; and God's own right hand is, therefore, the place of highest honour and power and privilege in the

universe. It has been, by custom, regarded as the most honourable place, as when Bathsheba went unto King Solomon 'he sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the King's mother; and she sat on his right hand:'* so, when Christ is exalted to God's right hand, it implies the highest honour in the universe. Further, the right hand is the position of highest power. We read of the right hand of power. To be at God's right hand denotes being invested with Divine power—becoming, as it were, the right hand of God to execute all His will; and so is Christ, to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth. Lastly, this position is associated with all happiness and glory and blessedness. 'In God's presence is fulness of joy, at His right hand are pleasures for ever more.'

2 Observe, it is the man Christ Jesus who is, thus, exalted to God's right hand; or, rather, the God-man; the same who was crucified, dead and buried, and rose again from the dead. This was the just recompense of His reward. He had been infinitely humbled, He is gloriously exalted. His Divine nature rendered it fitting that He should occupy so high a position as the right hand of God. His human nature feels the reward, enjoys the promotion, reaps the blessedness. It is worthy of being remembered that it is the human nature that is thus capable of being exalted; and that such promotion yet awaits the members of Christ's body.

3. It is in the heavenly places; i. e., the region of Divine grace and glory, the invisible church, the highest department

*1 Kings, ii. 19.

of God's kingdom, or, rather, the highest aspect of His sovereign power, to which all else is subject.

We are not to suppose that there is no particular locality, where Christ is, as to His Human nature. But the ideas here suggested are not to be confined or limited by the conditions of space or locality. God is everywhere. His right hand is everywhere. To be at His right hand, is, simply, a spiritual view of the Divine power, and honour, and glory of Christ, conveyed in language suited to our ordinary ways of speech. 'In heavenly places,' denotes, no doubt, a removal from all sorrow and sin, and degradation, so far as these can enter to disturb and defile. It is the sphere of Divine power, honour and glory, and this chiefly with reference to the church, through which God exerts the perfections of His grace and power, to the ends of the universe. Thus is Christ set down at God's right hand.

4. Further, it is 'far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.'

This is supposed to be a description of all angelic beings, in their various ranks or degrees, as well as every other class of beings that is named to which power is ascribed. Above them all Christ has been exalted, as Paul says in his Epistle to the Hebrews, 'Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;' again, 'To which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?'"* It was fitting that He, who had been so far degraded in carrying out the Will

* Heb. i. 5-13.

of God, in man's salvation, should be thus highly promoted ; ' We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.'* God has rendered to Him a just reward.

The different terms used in this passage, to denote the angels, may represent different ranks or degrees among them, or express different views of their excellence or power ; but how to distinguish them we cannot tell. It may be that Paul attached a definite idea to each of these names—principalities, powers, might, dominion—as indicating grades or orders among these heavenly hosts ; but what his idea may have been, it is difficult, or perhaps impossible, now to determine. We know in fact very little about the angels from any clear revelation in Scripture. They are all ministering spirits of God. Through them He executes His power in fulfilling His pleasure. They are secretly connected with His Church and Providence. ' The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. The Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place.' Paul may have seen in vision these heavenly hosts, and possessed a clear conception of their powers. It is plain that between finite man and the Infinite Creator there is room for a vast variety of spiritual beings, rising in power, the one rank above the other. Let the first rank be composed of a host of angels far exceeding man in intellect and moral faculties ; you may ascend, upward, in fancy, rank after rank, till you reach the most dazzling eminence of knowledge, and wisdom, and power ; always assuming that the gulf still remains an infinite one, be-

* Heb. ii. 9.

tween the highest creature and God. You have thus a long range of glittering throngs,* with plenty of work for all in infinite space, and room for each to labour in infinite space. These all kept their first estate; and when Jesus descended to do the work of a Saviour, and when engaged in it, they desired to look into these things, waiting with eagerness the issue. At last, His work accomplished, He ascends on high, leading captivity captive. At heaven's high palace the conqueror arrives, and 'lift up your heads, O ye gates!' is sounded at its portals, 'and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.'

Far above the foremost rank, yea crossing the infinite gulf that separates God and His ministers, we see Jesus sitting at the right hand of God, and the command given to those principalities, and powers, and dominions, is, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him'—worship the Lamb that was slain—saying, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.'

The expression added by the Apostle, 'Every name that is named both in this world, and in that which is to come,' denotes the absolute and perpetual exaltation of Christ, over all that is eminent or excellent, both now and hereafter.

*Thrones! Virtues! Princedoms! Dominations! Powers!—MILTON.

Let us remember, that, as we said before, it is the Mediator—the God-man—who is thus exalted to God's right hand. It is our great High Priest. As God, He is fitted for such a place, being possessed of Divine perfection. His dominion has a foundation, in right, and in actual power. It is a dominion over conscience and the soul as well as over outward nature. He is Lord and Christ. And, as man and Mediator, He receives it as His reward, He is invested in it for the ends of His work, and holds it constantly for the salvation of sinners. We have such an High Priest, who is passed into the heavens—'a Priest after the order of Melchisedec—able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God through Him.'

And the Apostle would have us to look to no other, but to look up to Him. Let neither man, nor priest, nor saint, nor angel, be the resting place of your eye, when you would look out for a Mediator. But at God's right hand—O blessed privilege!—you see your surety, your Advocate, your friend, your Omnipotent Redeemer.

III. But I hasten on to make some observations, on the last topic, in our present passage—'and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church.'

In this clause, there are two leading ideas, to which we shall direct your attention. The first is, you observe, 'hath put all things under His feet.' This may either refer to His universal Supremacy by which all things whatsoever, good or bad, are made subject to His rule and authority; or it may refer specially to all opposing things, which need to be degraded, accord-

ing to that other passage where we read, 'that He must reign until all enemies are put under His feet.' We prefer this latter interpretation; so that, as the former verse included His dominion over all powers whatever, angelic or human, now or hereafter, and might, therefore, be considered as especially indicating His supremacy over all that is good, this verse and this clause of it may be taken as including all that is evil, which is dealt with in a befitting manner, being put under His feet. Evil spirits and wicked men, all the powers of sin, all the machinations and devices of Satan, are, thus, under the feet of the exalted Mediator. It may be that these things seem to triumph for the present; but their triumph is short lived even in appearance. Soon their boast will be turned to shame. But even for the present they cannot rise above a certain limit. They are even now actually under the feet of Him who has all power given Him in heaven and on earth. Satan cannot go beyond his chain. His angels dare not transgress their permitted field. The raging of the heathen and of wicked opposers of the truth is kept within bounds. The progress of tyranny and crime is checked. On the earth the direst organization of evil is arrested; and dark though the condition of mankind may be, through the ignorance, immorality, unbelief, and ungodliness that abound, yet a bright gleam of confidence and hope falls on the eye of faith, when it recognizes everywhere the unfailing power of God's word, and remembers the assurance that 'He who is the servant of God,' and 'now at God's right hand,' 'shall not fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment on earth, and the nations receive the law at

His mouth.’* Indeed, brethrén, there is no other consolation to be found, in surveying the sad state of humanity, every where, except that He reigns at God’s right hand, who is the Saviour and Deliverer of man, who makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and restrains the remainder of His wrath.

The second idea in this verse may, well, suggest to us the practical application of this whole passage, and with this we shall close our remarks at this time. ‘And hath given Him,’ says the Apostle, ‘to be head over all things to the Church.’ Within the Church, Christ is Supreme Head, who, besides, is Head of all principality and power, and wields the sceptre of universal empire. To all believers He is the source of life and of law; the fountain of peace and of comfort; the rock of strength and of security.

Let me press on you to look unto Jesus exalted at God’s right hand as, *first and foremost*, the source of life and of law to you. He is given as Head, Supreme Head to His Church; and what the head is to the body, even the centre and source of life and activity, that must He be to you, if you are or would be members of His body. ‘He is the resurrection and the life. If any believe on Him though he were dead yet shall he live.’ By faith you are ‘baptized unto His death, and are also raised with Him to newness of life.’ You are united to Him. The penalty of death, of spiritual death, was exhausted by Him for you and in your behalf. The effects of that death, in your union to Christ, begin to be undone and you become quickened, and made spiritually alive. And this work, begun when faith first

* Isa. xlii. 1-4.

unites to Him, is carried on to perfection by the same faith that looks to Him as the source of law. Receiving His loving commands, as your head; taking His Word as your directory; following His example as your master, you grow up unto the measure of perfection—‘grow up unto Him who is head in all things.’ Thus the true believer may say, with Paul, ‘I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, and the life which I now live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of man, who loved me and gave Himself for me.’

But *nextly* as Head—Supreme Head to the Church. He is the fountain of peace and of comfort. If the head of the body is distracted, then the members can possess no rest. The troubles of the head are proverbially the sorest to endure. On the other hand, if the head is sound and clear and peaceful, how much does it contribute to the health and comfort of the body! But, Christ—the Head of the Church, has entered on rest. He now suffers no more. Is not this the best guarantee that the suffering members remaining on earth will be comforted, and delivered from all their pains? Yes! and did He not say ‘Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you.’ And is He not a merciful and faithful High Priest who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities? Look up, then, to your Head. Consider His peaceful sitting at God’s right hand. Remember He is your Head. Is not the very thought already sufficient to mitigate your sufferings whatever they may be, and assuage your grief, however deep. Above all ask and ye shall receive. Hitherto ye have asked nothing. ‘Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.’

Finally, as head of the church, He is the Rock of its strength, and its eternal security. He is head of all things. All opposing elements are put under His feet. Is temptation, without, too powerful for you? Look upward to your head! He can turn aside its face, or so manage His Providence that no temptation will be brought to bear on you greater than you may overcome; but with the temptation will grant a way of escape that you may be able to bear it. Is sin, within, a remanent power of which you are justly afraid? Still look upward to your head! Your sin, your besetting sin, your sad infirmity, the fascination to forbidden pleasure you feel,—it is under His feet. It can stir no farther than He allows it. Be sure that you sincerely and truly look to Him in faith, and you are really safe now, and will be consciously and openly safe in eternity.—AMEN.

LECTURE XIV.

EPHESIANS.

CHAP. I.—23.

"The Church,—Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

In the previous context the Apostle, in language whose sublimity is the reflection of the sublimest theme in revelation, expatiates on the dignity, and power, and supremacy which belong to Christ, at God's right hand. Our minds are raised to a dizzying elevation, where we contemplate the Mediator seated on the throne of Universal Empire. It must be remembered, too, that it is man who, in union with God, is thus highly exalted; for Christ, as God, cannot be exalted, being essentially and eternally God. But His Divine nature, sustains His human, in a position so transcendently glorious. The whole tribute of Divine praise and worship is brought to the feet of Jesus, raised to God's right hand; the whole weight and authority of the Divine government is laid upon his shoulders; His arm wields the entire power of Divine Providence; and

His heart is swelled with the full flood of Divine blessedness. *Mere* man were incapable of all this; but not man united to Godhead. Bearing this in mind, our thoughts may properly be fixed on the fact, however sublime and astonishing, that it is a man, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh—one from among the people—the elder brother of the family—that sits and reigns at God's right hand. It is this that brings the subject closely home to our hearts, and makes it as precious and practical as it is sublime. The Apostle was not leading his readers on a merely speculative and imaginative flight, aloft to the third heavens, to contemplate, for a little, what was of no earthly advantage or profit to the believing heart. He, first, shews the universal dominion that belongs to the Mediator—His supremacy over not only all that is good, but also all that is evil; and, then, he declares that God hath given Him to be head over all things to His church. Surely it is of the utmost consequence to the church that its head is no inferior or subordinate personage; that He is not in a position to be controlled or hindered in His purposes, far less defeated; that He is no mere principality, or power, or might, or dominion, or name that is named; but exalted Mediator above them all, having all things at His control; and, if of consequence in reality, surely it must be cheering and comforting and animating to know it, and to live under its sustaining power. The words of our present text, with which this most sublime chapter closes, contain a description of the church in its connection with Him who is its exalted and glorious head. In dependence on that wisdom which cometh from above and the teach-

ing of Him who is the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation, let us now confine attention to this brief passage. Although brief, it is full of meaning, and well worth our close and prayerful consideration.

I. We shall first offer a few remarks in explanation of the terms, here, used by the Apostle.

(a). Here, for the first time, in this Epistle, the expression 'the Church' is introduced; what, let us ask, is the idea attached to it by the sacred writer? There can be no doubt, I think, that he here uses the term to designate the whole body of the Elect, that had been already or were designed to be, effectually called of God—regenerated—sanctified and eternally saved. The word in the original is derived from the term 'to call' which is employed to express, not merely outward calling, but, effectual calling. 'The Church,' then, means the whole number of those who are to be effectually called. This is the fundamental or essential idea of the Church; and, therefore, 'the Church' really and truly consists of those and those only who believe in Christ, and who are renewed in their heart and character by the Holy Spirit. This idea of the Church, which is the true fundamental idea, and could easily be shewn to be so, according to Scripture, is never to be lost sight of; and in the passage before us it is manifestly the only idea which is to be entertained, when it is said that 'God gave Christ to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him, that filleth all in all.' It is quite true that the expression 'the Church' is frequently applied to professing communities of Christians, embracing not only true

believers, but also mere nominal professors of the faith. This application of the term to the outward visible Church of professing Christians is rendered necessary from the fact, that God alone can judge of the true state and character of individuals; that He has not committed to any man or body of men the right or power of judging on that subject; and has actually designed and established a kingdom on earth consisting of those who profess the name of Christ, and adherence to His Word. Speaking to those who are incapable of judging beyond what 'appears,' the Scriptures use the word 'Church' to designate the professing Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. Here, there are believers and unbelievers—wheat and tares—both together. But man cannot make a separation, and is not entitled to attempt it. The professing Church, so long as it is 'apparently' and by all that man can judge of, faithful to Christ's Gospel and laws, must be regarded and treated, by man, as if it were the true Church. This, however, does not do away with the fundamental idea of the Church as, in reality and before God, consisting only of believers and persons who have been effectually called—in short, of the elect. It is plain, too, that, in the statement here made by the Apostle, 'the Church' must be taken in this view, as including the elect who are truly Christ's people and excluding all others as having nothing but His name. (*b.*) Of this Church the Apostle says, it is 'the body' of Christ—a very common and favorite figure of speech in the Epistles of Paul. Here it occurs in continuation of the figure by which Christ is set forth as '*Head*'—Supreme Head to the Church. It is a favorite idea of Paul's

to represent Christ and the Church as a living organism, perfect and complete, with head and members, all one, like a perfect man. By this figure, the Spirit of God, in the writings of his servant, teaches us many important and sublime views of truth. Among the most obvious of these views is the oneness of Christ and His church. He and it are identified, as the body and the head are, or, form but one person in man. This fact set forth by Paul, under this figure, was announced by Christ himself, under a similar figure, when he said, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches,' and, without a figure, when he prayed, in his intercessory prayer, 'that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us;' and again, 'I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfect in one.' It is a prominent truth of the Scriptures, touching the way of salvation, that the sinner who is regenerated and believes in Christ is united with Him, by a close and imperishable union. It may be mysterious. It is acknowledged to be so. But, still, it is held forth in Scripture so often and so fully and plainly, that we must receive it by faith, though we cannot fully understand it. This union is effected by the Holy Spirit, who, dwelling in the head without measure, dwells also, truly and permanently, in each and all of the members. He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Christ and His church are, as truly, one, as the head and members of the human body form one person.

There is another general view of the church, which the Apostle intends by this figure of the body, and on which he insists, largely, elsewhere. It is, that whilst the church is one

with its head, even Christ, it is composed of individuals, who differ from each other, in both gifts and graces, as well as outward circumstances. As the body consists of many members, differing from each other, in structure and office—so, also, the church consists of various parts and numerous individuals, living in different ages, occupying different spheres, possessed of different gifts and graces. The different parts and members of the body fit into their respective places, and, together, make up the body, the essential substance of which runs through them all and unites them as one. So, all the members of Christ's body possess the same spirit and are alike in the essentials of Christian character, but, in other respects, differ from each other, so that no two members are, perfectly or entirely, alike. The oneness, of the head and members—of Christ and His church, does not prevent the body—the church, from embracing innumerable parts, that differ in some respects from each other; in other words, innumerable individual Christians or believers, no two of whom are perfectly the same. And the variety and dissimilarity of the members do not prevent the church from being one—one in itself, and one with its head.

You may run over the Old Testament worthies, from first to last, and, if possible, you might pursue the survey to the end of time, no two individuals would be found altogether alike; yet the same Spirit animates all, and the same essential elements of spiritual life are found in all. You may dissect the human body and cut it up into an endless number of separate parts, no two of these parts, however minute or however prominent,

will be found to be the same; and yet the same blood was flowing through all, each part filled its own place, and all together made up one body.

The practical application of this view is also very obvious. It branches out into several useful and important lessons. I shall just mention a few of these, without enlarging on them in this place. 1st. It should teach us to look abroad on the Church of Christ, as it presents itself to our consideration, with an enlarged charity. We should not, indeed, at any time, neglect or under-estimate the great essentials of the Christian faith and the Christian character. These must be regarded as vital. But, differences in non-essential matters, should be put into the background; nor should we, on account of these, refuse to others the right hand of fellowship. In reference to individuals, what variety may there not be in natural endowments, in education, in the manners and habits acquired by custom or training, in rank, in wealth, in occupation, in the sphere occupied in the world, or in the church?—and this quite consistently with the existence of the same spirit in the heart, the same faith in Christ, and the same general character of renewed love to God and man, and the same endeavour to serve God and promote His kingdom. Let each of us remember that all these things are merely outward or circumstantial; that it might have pleased God to put *us* in different circumstances from those we occupy; that God has work for all to do; and that all that truly love the Lord Jesus Christ are the members of His body, fulfilling, all, their own office, and deserving honour in so doing. 2nd. It should teach us to regard

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other departments of Christ's church on earth with feelings of enlarged charity. As we have said, this does not imply that we are to become indifferent to what is essential. There are certain portions of the revealed truth which all true Christians, no matter where they are found, or by what name known, do, indeed, receive and believe, and without which they would not be worthy of the name. But there are minor and less important matters, on which true Christians have differed and continue to differ. We can scarcely grant to a Unitarian body, the name of a 'Church of Christ;' for how can any man be a Christian who denies the main prop and foundation of the Christian religion, which consists in Christ's being the Son of God—God himself—incarnate for man's salvation? And what right has any body to name itself after Christ, whilst it really denies Christ; robbing Him of His fundamental nature, and the church and mankind of their only hope? But, apart from such ruinous errors, as take away the very foundation of our religion, there is room for charity, in respect of many things of which we cannot approve—or, rather, we are not to allow errors, of a minor kind, to make us stand aloof from other sections of Christians, but, frankly, grant that they are members of Christ's Church. This lesson, we say, flows from the very notion of Christ's Church being a body, embracing true believers and all true believers, of every country and denomination. 3rd. But our views, on this subject, should not be allowed to evaporate in mere sentiment. They suggest, and ought to enforce, an earnest and active sympathy and co-operation, among the members of Christ's Church. How exqui-

sitely do the various parts of the body aid and sustain each other, in whatever line of action, or in whatever course of endurance the body may be engaged ! So, ought all who belong to Christ's body to aid and sustain each other, and to work together, in common undertakings for the extension of Christ's kingdom and the good of the world.

These are quite obvious lessons. But we need often to be reminded of them, lest we should become narrow or selfish—lest we should confine our charity and our sympathy entirely to our own adopted and favourite sphere—lest we should lose the benign influence, on our own hearts and the hearts of others, of that example which our Master has set us on earth, and that all-embracing love which He now exercises in heaven towards all who truly love God, and are the called, according to His purpose.

(c) The Apostle says that the church is His body—‘the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.’ Christ, as regards his divine nature, is everywhere. He, as God, fills the universe with His presence ; He filleth all in all. Yet, in another aspect, viz, as Mediator, the church, which is His body, is *His* fulness. It is to this that all the energy of His mediatorial strength has been directed ; and it is here that we see Him crowned with His fullest reward. The Church, i. e., the whole company of the redeemed, is the fulness of Christ, as Mediator ; for when we behold this body—Christ and the Redeemed—we see a full, complete and perfect object ; we see Christ filling, completing and perfecting the church, and we see the church filling, completing and perfecting Christ. We understand the

expression as embracing both ideas ; or, rather, these two thoughts are, in our opinion, here, expressed by the Apostle under one idea, when he calls the church ‘the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.’ It is a double idea, so to speak ; it has two sides, or it radiates two ways ; it respects the members and the head at one and the same time. The church is Christ’s fulness, because He has increased outwards to it—He has developed into it—He has expanded into it—as a seed into the tree and the branches ; and also the church is Christ’s fulness, because in ^{the} condescension of grace He has taken it to be part of Himself, and so it completes Him. It makes up and perfects one entire ‘man’ ; and when viewed in its connection, thus established, is *necessary* to complete Christ. Without it He would be a head without a body. With it united to Him, in all its parts, each made perfect in due time, He is full. The church is His fulness, also, in the sense that it contributes *all* that is necessary to render Christ as Mediator, full, perfect, and complete ; in which state of fulness He, as head, and the church as His members, shall abide for ever in the glorified condition of heaven. •

II. Having, then, endeavoured to explain the import of this passage, let me now, in the second place, illustrate, more particularly, the substance of the statement here made—that the church is Christ’s fulness—the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. The idea that the church is Christ’s fulness, contains, we have said, two thoughts, or it has two sides,—it respects both the members and the head. Let me expand these two thoughts, a little, for our common instruction and edification.

1st. The church is Christ's fulness, because it has grown out of Christ, and He has increased outwards so as to form the church. He has developed into it. He has expanded into it; as a seed grows into a tree with its branches.

He is the head—the centre and source of the body—the seed or root which, by development, grows into a perfect being. This thought is no unusual one in Scripture. Christ was, from the first, held forth under the idea of 'a seed'—the seed of the woman, that was to bruise the serpent's head—the seed promised to Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. 'And he saith not, unto seeds as of many; but 'as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.' Similar to this is the expression in Isaiah's prediction, 'And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand as an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.' By the Apostle John he is spoken of as the 'root of David,' and the 'bright and morning star.' But if He is thus described, as a seed or a root, we may look for His development and growth; and so we find that this also is set forth in Scripture under similar figures of speech. The church is the result of the travail of His soul. Believers, in every age, are His children—His offspring; and they, united together, form His body. It is from Him that the church receives its life, and all that truly belongs to it of an essential kind; and Christ lives in it. Out of Him, so to speak, the church and every believer grows. 'It hath pleased God that in Him should all fulness dwell.' 'In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete (or filled) in Him.'

But, lest we should be thought to be using altogether mystical language on this subject, we may advance one or two views which may help, in some measure, to its explication, and to render it plain to every one, so far as the Scripture guides us.

First, Christ fills the church and each true believer with His Spirit, and Christ thus lives, by His Spirit, in each and all. The Spirit and Christ are one. He that is joined unto Christ is one Spirit, and so one with Christ. The Spirit is not a mere visitant or sojourner in those who belong truly to the church, but a resident. He imparts Spiritual life. He enlightens the mind and renews the heart and will. He is sent by Christ; He is one with Christ. Therefore, Christ lives in every true believer, and fills, more and more, the soul with His life, until at last it becomes perfectly assimilated to the character of Christ.

Another view, secondly, is that presented in the words, 'out of His fulness have we all received and grace for grace.' Faith is the instrument of receiving out of His fulness, or, the medium of communication. In the exercise of faith—looking unto Jesus—the true Christian imbibes the grace of Christ—the grace that was displayed by Him, and which fills Him. He himself, as Mediator, received the grace of God, and that without measure. What heavenly virtue, what righteous principle, what holy desire and affection was lacking in Him? None. The Christian by faith receives a corresponding grace to every grace that was in Christ. And He is at length filled, according to His measure or capacity, out of Christ. Christ is not merely,

in this, an object of contemplation, whom, admiring and imitating, the believer at length comes to resemble; but, as we have seen already, Christ, by His Spirit, occupies his soul, enlightens his eyes, and purifies his heart, drawing the soul to himself, and secretly filling it with His grace.

But, thirdly, Christ imparts to the church and to each believer all spiritual blessedness. Having, himself, suffered and died for sin laid to His charge; having borne the curse and satisfied justice, He now reaps the reward—He enjoys the blessing—He has entered on His rest. Christ fills His Church with peace and comfort and joy. To us, sinful and unworthy creatures, the very name of Christ ought to be as ointment poured out; how much more, when He, by His Spirit, dwells in the heart, may we expect a fulness of joy? His pardoning mercy is high as the heavens; it is broader than the seas. His merciful inclination to pardon the chief of sinners might well fill us with courage to lay hold of Him, and so impart new life to our wounded spirits. His constant tenderness and sympathy should renew, at all times, our confidence, and restore to us the joy of his salvation. And thus does Christ lead and encourage His people, whom He saves from their sins.

If His pardoning mercy thus wins the trembling sinner, His sanctifying grace and strength recover and establish the erring saint, time after time, until he is at last made perfect. Christ is not far from Peter when he sinks; and, though He may sleep for a little in the ship, He will not allow the storm to overwhelm it. Thus He saves His people, and renews their blessedness. Their path is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Now the joy that the Christian may attain to is so great that it is in one place called ‘all the fulness of God.’* It is imparted by Christ’s Spirit to the heart, and in this way it is also the fulness of Christ.

Whatsoever, then, of true Spiritual life any one possesses, whatsoever of grace and heavenly virtue, whatsoever of true blessedness, is just the effect of Christ’s dwelling in the heart by faith, and of the Spirit of Christ dwelling and operating there. It is Christ really from whom all this comes. It comes in a way that may be mysterious; yet we must believe that it comes from Him, and from Him alone. This matter is best improved by us, by trying whether these fruits are in us. There is no difficulty—at least there is no mystery—about this; and it is our duty to try ourselves in this way rather than any other. By the fruits of an enlightened understanding, and a sanctified heart, and a godly life, we may know that we are being ‘filled’ out of the fulness of Christ—that Christ is forming within us the hope of glory. Are these fruits manifest to us when we examine ourselves? If so, then let us say, like Paul, believing in Christ’s indwelling presence ‘I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’ If not, then let us fear, lest, through unbelief, we come short, being left to ourselves, without the power of Christ or His Spirit, and, so, still dead in trespasses and sins.

2nd. Let us now consider the idea of the Apostle in its other aspect. We have seen how the church is the fulness of Christ, in the sense of its being the development, as it were, of

* Eph. iii. 19

the root, by which it grows up into a full body, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. The other side of the idea is embodied in the thought that the church fills up, completes and perfects Christ. We must still contemplate Christ and His church as one. He, in condescension, has taken it to be part of Himself, and, in this view, without it, He would be incomplete. So Paul in one place calls the church 'Christ.'—1 Cor. xii. 12.—The body is Christ according to this passage. It forms part of Him, and completes Him. We are, thus, led to consider all true Christians as necessary parts of what Christ himself has chosen for His own body; and the whole church of the redeemed, when gathered together, will, together with the head, make one Christ. Now this truth does not, as is surely obvious to every one, imply that Christ, as God, is incomplete or imperfect; nor that Christ, as man, is anything else than absolutely righteous and holy; nor yet, that, as God-man, He is in himself deficient in any respect. But, still, having chosen to become one with His redeemed church, it follows that the church is that which completes His mystical person and is needful for this end. And, although we may not venture to speculate far on these lofty themes, yet there are one or two illustrations which we may safely bring forward in order to make this subject as plain as possible. We are accustomed to divide the work of Christ, on earth, into the two departments of doing and suffering. In each of these departments He rendered a perfect obedience and made complete atonement for His church, nay, made the only atonement that can suffice for its salvation. He only is meritorious. His

work alone is sacrificial. He yielded a perfect obedience to God, and suffered without sin. His obedience and suffering covered the whole extent of man's duty and man's debt. But it must be admitted that obedience and suffering might be valuable, and, in some respects, necessary, in other circumstances than those precise circumstances in which Christ lived and died. Heavenly graces might be exhibited and displayed in a vast variety of circumstances. And, so, this leads us to venture the idea that whilst all that was needful for meritoriously saving the church was accomplished by Christ himself, yet to each individual member of the church, in all ages, is left the development and display of grace under somewhat peculiar circumstances; and that the vast variety and diversity of circumstances had to be encountered by the grace of Christ in the different members of His church in all ages.

Thus Christ lives through all dispensations; and it were easy to shew that all the manifestations of faith and good works—all the goodness and good works of the saints, both of the Old and New Testaments, were just due to Christ living in them. Shall we say, then, that these varied manifestations of character—i. e. of faith and godliness—of patient suffering and successful contending against evil—were not necessary in order, in one sense, to complete and make up the fulness of Christ? Thus, at last, when His redeemed Church is gathered together, it may be seen that all needful manifestations of the grace of Christ have been effected, and that the Church, with its Head, has triumphed over evil in every possible way. 'None of us,' says Paul (and he has reference especially to two ex-

extremes of Christian character—the weak in faith, and the strong in faith) ‘none of us liveth unto himself, and none of us dieth unto himself, but whether we live we live unto the Lord, and whether we die we die unto the Lord.’ Is not Christ’s glory, —Christ’s fulness—thus promoted, in some way, by all varieties of Christian character, and by the lives of all His people in all ages.’ And Paul himself speaks of sufferings in which he rejoices, as they ‘fill up,’ he says, ‘that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, in my flesh, for His body’s sake, which is the Church.’ He thus identifies the sufferings which he had to endure with Christ’s afflictions. But our Lord Himself did the same when He used the language to Paul the persecutor, ‘Saul! Saul! why persecutest thou me?’ and in the language used in His representation of the judgment, ‘inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these ye have done it unto me!’

We cannot, however, pursue this subject farther—enough has been said to shew with what propriety the Church may be called the fulness of Christ, both as He pours forth His life into it, and it, in turn, completes Him, according to the condescension of His grace, in making it part of himself.

Two inquiries of a practical kind, at once, suggest themselves, and with these we shall close. 1st. Are we truly members of Christ’s body—the Church? It is, only, the Spirit of Christ that can make us such, and it is, only, by faith on our part that this is effected. If we are members of Christ we will love Him and all the other members, and we will grow up into His fulness. 2nd. Are we, if members, aware of our privilege and

duty—to contribute our portion towards the fulness of Christ? Each Christian should act, as remembering that Christ is with him and in him, and feel, how responsible the position is, of being even one of the humblest members of that glorious body—which, at last, is entirely without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.—AMEN.

FINIS.

APPENDIX.

A.—RE-BAPTISM.—(Page 3.)

Whether Baptism should ever be administered, to the same person, a second time, if at first administered in the name of Christ, is a question of some importance. In certain respects it may seem trivial; but, if re-baptism should tend, in any way, to countenance the notion that the ordinance is of a saving nature, or that it possesses an intrinsic efficacy, or, that regeneration is necessarily implied in it, then the question becomes a vital question, and it must be settled on solid grounds. The passage, Acts xix. 1-7, is assumed to afford an instance of re-baptism. Paul is there said to have found certain disciples who had been baptised unto John's baptism; and, it is supposed, (from v. 5) that he baptized them again in the name of the Lord Jesus. Even Olshausen, whose commentary professes to be founded on critical examination, assumes that Paul re-baptized these disciples; and, inasmuch as Apollos is not said to have been re-baptized, though it is stated of him that he knew 'the baptism of John,' that Author boldly avers that "the most suitable supposition we can make, is, that Apollos was really baptized in the name of Christ in Ephesus, by Aquila." (See his Com. in loc.) Now, it may be questioned, at least, whether the record before us, presents a case of re-baptism. It may, indeed, appear to do so, from the way in which our translation is pointed. But 'the pointing' is matter of interpretation. When read with a different view of its sense, the

passage stands thus, '4. Then Paul said,—“John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus; and when they heard *this* they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” All this is Paul's statement. He says, that, when the people in John's time, heard that they should believe on Christ, they complied, and that John baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus. This is the substance of Paul's statement. The narrative goes on to say that Paul laid his hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost; but, if the above reading is correct, he did not re-baptize them.

John's Baptism was, certainly, a baptism unto Jesus Christ; although, having regard to the transition from the Old to the New Testament dispensation, it was a baptism rather of repentance than of faith. As, however, the way of salvation is the same, in all ages, it is impossible, to conceive that any contrariety should exist between John's baptism and that of the Apostle, or that it should be needful to undo or even supplement what John did in his baptism, seeing that his baptism pointed to Christ. We would only remark farther, that the words of the original seem to us to confirm the view here presented, notice being taken to the use of the particles. They are as follow: *εἶπεν δὲ Παῦλος· Ἰωάννης ἐβάπτισεν βάπτισμα μετανοίας, τῷ λαῷ λέγων, εἰς τὸν ἐρχόμενον μετ' αὐτὸν ἵνα πιστεύσωσιν, τουτέστιν εἰς τὸν Ἰησοῦν. ἀκούσαντές δὲ ἐβαπτίσθησαν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ.*

B.—THE APOSTOLIC OFFICE.—(Page 10.)

An objection to what is alleged in the lecture as the distinctive peculiarity of the Apostolic office (to declare, infallibly, the Gospel,) has been taken on the grounds that the Apostles disagreed among themselves in their procedure in planting Christianity, that Paul and Peter acted in opposition to each other, and that inconsistencies in the conduct of the Apostles may be pointed out. This objection would be unanswerable, if it were not inapplicable,—for, it must be admitted, errors and even sins, in the life and conduct of the Apostles did occur; as they have occurred in the conduct and life of all other men. But, the objection has very little force, if any at

all, as against the doctrine that the Apostles were infallible in their teaching. The only difficulty lies in the idea that Paul's conduct, on some occasions, such as his circumcising Timothy,* (which, however, may be justified), and the conduct of Peter, as set forth in Gal. ii. 11-14, and such like acts or practice, were, really, a teaching or inculcating of what they wished to be received by mankind as belief and duty under the Gospel. This difficulty, however, resolves itself into the impossibility of *our* distinguishing between the man and the Apostle—since it is held that the Apostles, as men, were sinners and liable still to err and sin, whilst, as Apostles, inspired of God for a special purpose, they were infallible. If they were, still, but men, sinful and imperfect, we may, certainly, expect that failings would occur in their practice and conduct; and since their whole life was devoted to the one work of proclaiming and establishing the gospel, we need not be surprised to find some instances in which they came short or erred. As inspired teachers, however, they may, certainly, be regarded as infallible. They furnish us, themselves, with the materials by which we may judge, of their own conduct. They give us 'the Gospel' for the rule of our faith and conduct, and not their own practice, as a whole and in every particular.

On the subject of the Apostolic office, see an able discussion between Bishop McIlvaine and Prof. Hodge, as published in the 'British and Foreign Evangelical Review' for April, 1865.

ADOPTION.—(p.p. 26 & 65.)

On the subject of the Permanency and Inviolability of the relation of Sonship, as established, under the covenant of Grace, between believers and God; and, on the identity of that relationship with that which the Son, Jesus Christ, sustains to the Father;—I have to refer my readers to the recent distinguished work of the Rev. Principal Candlish, entitled 'The Fatherhood of God.' We must, here, however, make room for the following quotation: Dr. Candlish says, (page 278—1st edition) "'The Son abideth ever.' I believe that

* Acts xiv. 13

if we study the human and earthly life of Christ, with that as the motto or key to it, we may come to a better understanding of what the relation of Fatherhood and Sonship between God and us, if we are in His Son, really is—and ought to be apprehended by us to be—than we could do by means of the most minute and articulate enumeration of fatherly acts and offices on the part of God, and filial duties and responsibilities on our part. I own, therefore, that I have a feeling of relief in being warrantably compelled to say, that I have no time or space left for what I might call relational details. The relation itself is manifested and acted out in the history of the man Christ Jesus. Let an insight into the relation be got, by deep thought exercised upon the history. Let it be thought, however, based upon this one condition—that there is in the relation a very peculiar element of inviolability.

All other conceivable relations, so far as I can see, may be violated. Husband and wife may part. Rulers and subjects may be arranged in arms against one another. Friends may disagree, and brothers may fight. Parent and child on earth may be mortal foes. All other conceivable relations admit of fluctuation and variety, according to change of circumstances. They are all liable to breaks and interruptions; to fitful and capricious movements on one side or other; to strange alternations of pathos and of passion. This relation alone; the relation between the Eternal Father and his Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,—and in Him, so far as they can realize it, between ‘his Father and their Father,’ and ‘the little ones whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren;’ this relation alone is always and for ever the same. From whatever may be turbulent, uncertain, or uneasy, in any other relation, we may take refuge at any time in this one. Be the temptation that assails us ever so strong; be the affliction that tries us ever so severe; be the work we have to do ever so hard, or the death we have to die ever so cruel;—in the unchanging fatherhood of God we, like His Son, may have evermore quiet peace.”

C.—UNIVERSALISM.—(Page 117.)

The doctrine of Universalism, seeks to dispose of many difficulties, if not of all, in a sweeping manner; but it has no footing

in the Scriptures, and the principles on which it is based are opposed to facts, and to our deepest consciousness.

The Universalist cannot give us a rational account, which, on the mere ground of God's infinite Power and Goodness—the ground on which he stands, he is bound to do, of the existence of evil and suffering in the world at any time and for any period. That they are remedial, and that all suffering will terminate when and because the remedy is accomplished, derogates from the Goodness and Power of God as much, in reality, as to suppose that God cannot, or will not, prevent evil at all. To ascribe a true principle of Justice to God as a co-ordinate perfection of His being with His Goodness, and to allow that this is brought into exercise in the government and final destination of His intelligent creatures, is, what our conscience approves of, and what we are required to do, by the plainest announcements of Holy Writ.

We do not profess to be able to give any account of the origin of moral evil. We dare not give a false one—representing God in a far more odious light than that which represents Him simply as doing justice in the punishment of the wicked; for, the Universalist theory represents Him as a Father putting His children to unnecessary suffering. We cannot, however, enter fully on the subject.

All that we have averred, in the lecture, is, that, a certain unity will be established, in the long run; and, harmony and order, will, under God, be the ultimate condition of the universe. Beyond this view we have no warrant to proceed either from reason or Scripture; but thus far we may advance with all safety and consistency.

(Quotation from Dr. Candlish.)

Speaking of the different relations in which God stands and will stand to His intelligent creatures, Dr. Candlish says: ('Fatherhood of God,' p. 13.) "That there is and must be, a certain thread of unity running through them all, and harmonizing them all, is probable, *a priori*. It is probable, as a mere deduction or inference from the unity of God; the oneness of the Divine nature. And accordingly, it may be anticipated that in the end, or in the long run,—as the result or issue of the actual dealings of God with the other intelligences

in the universe,—a unity of the strictest sort may come to prevail and be established, in the final adjustment, whatever that may be, of the terms on which He and they are to stand related towards one another for ever. It may not be the same unity for all. There may not be the same adjustment in respect of all. Undoubtedly two opposite poles are indicated, not by Scripture only, but by reason and conscience as well; both of them simple enough; the one simply, penal and accursed; the other simply, free and blessed; to one or other of which the conflicting elements in the troubled chaos of created will appear to be all tending. But that simplicity, whether as ‘a savour of life unto life,’ or as ‘a savour of death unto death,’ is not yet. As things now are, a somewhat more mixed and complete system of relationship would seem to be, if I may so speak, the order of the day.”

CHRIST ‘THE BOND’ IN THE ULTIMATE STATE.—(p. 121.)

(Quotation from Dr. McLaggan.)

We make the following quotation from Prof. McLaggan’s Lectures, p. 149 :

“The whole creation, it would seem, so far as it is known to us, may be embraced in a three-fold division, dead matter, living organization, rational spirit. These three, again, it is clear, are so combined in the single fabric of human nature, that man, being made as to his spirit in the image of God, can at will apply the living organs of his body, dust though they are, to the highest ends of God’s service and glory, arriving by the very same path at the summit of his own appropriate perfection, and happiness. Thus, viewed on one side, he seems an epitome of creation; viewed on the other, he is manifestly fashioned in wonderful adjustment to the will and attributes and fellowship of his Maker—alike the Supreme Ruler and Supreme Benefactor. And, what is more, by such a frame, he appears capable both of being brought into any nearness of union with Godhead itself, which the purposes of heaven may require, and of constituting in that relation a most expressive and assuming pledge to the world of intelligent beings, that God will never relinquish or despise the meanest any more

than the chiefest thing that He has made, but will for ever maintain a powerful and gracious hold upon the whole product and workmanship of His hands."

. . . "In His humanity, all the essences and energies of creation are combined and gathered to a head. With them His Godhead is personally united by an omnipotent, immutable decree. That union is not merely a magnificent semblance, a marvellous phenomenon, the ends of which are all answered simply through its being seen. It is a reality fruitful by its own nature of immediate effects peculiar and proper to itself. Amongst all the connections—and they are most real—which subsist between the Creator and His creatures, this is the junction, the bond, the link, which draws after it and sustains the mightiest and most glorious results. The whole of these consequences it were premature to speak of, but one or two for illustration may be mentioned here. When the filial Godhead put on humanity, the union was such that this brightness of the Father's glory and express image of His person could go forth enveloped and concealed in the likeness of sinful flesh—be seen for a season no more save as a helpless babe, an obscure youth, 'a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people.' (Ps. xxii. 6.) When His mission was finished, and he rose from the dead to ascend on high, the union *again* was such, that in this child of the dust, 'whose face had been marred more than any man's, and His form more than the children of men' could now shine forth, not merely as beheld by the three disciples on the Mount, but in all the majesty of primeval brightness as adored by angels, *that same* effulgence of God's glory, those express lineaments, and express image of His person—and to add only what were sufficient of itself, Immanuel, God over all, reigns on His Father's throne, and *shall* reign for ever—a crucified man! There is therefore a true and perfect unity of person in Him. To all eternity He is one and the same. In Him, if the elements of all things meet, it is that the right to all things may be made good. 'If in Him the first fruits are thus holy, it is that the lump also may be holy' (Rom. xi. 16)—consecrated, that is, to the Divine service. And, on the other side, in a sense Divine and unparalleled, 'the Father loveth the son!' (John iii. 35.) It is primarily the love of God to God; but in this

blessedness, so far as accords with a created nature, the humanity shares. With man's lips did he testify, 'In Thy presence is fullness of joy.' (Ps. xvi. 11.) 'Thou hast made the king most blessed for ever; Thou hast made him exceeding glad with Thy countenance.' (Ps. xxi. 6.) And is not this to show that all creation represented and bound up in Him, so far as conformed to His image and will, shall enter, according to its nature, into His very joy, and that when, in the dispensation of the fulness of the times, God shall have 'gathered together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him,' (Eph. i 10), then a new era shall open, when sin, with its estrangements, being utterly expelled, a perfect order of harmony shall be established. that God may thenceforward be all things in all."

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